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‘Scattered Squalor’ and ‘Downland Homes’.  
Interwar housing at  
Patcham, Brighton

Geoffrey Mead

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Sussex

2012

## Statement and declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted, either in the same or a different form, to this or any other university for a degree

Signature

Geoffrey Mead

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**Doctor of Philosophy**

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Interwar housing at  
Patcham, Brighton**

**Summary**

The Brighton suburb of Patcham is an area which was transforming rapidly into a suburban housing district in the interwar period. An urban fringe area, where the distinction between the various housing areas is largely explained by the differential ownership and sale of the former agricultural land, and the subsequent development as suburban housing under different developers. The factors bringing about the urban expansion, particularly in relation to Brighton and its growing economy are discussed, as is the declining agricultural economy. A variety of suburban housing types emerged, ranging from army huts and architect-designed detached villas in the early post-World War One period, to large corporate housing developments during the 1930s. This period was one where largely uncontrolled building was taking place outside Brighton municipal control, a situation partly resolved by the extension of borough boundaries in the late 1920s, and the social and legislative factors pertinent to urban housing issues and suburban growth are discussed. This pattern of areal difference is readily discernible in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where the palimpsest of earlier patterns still influences the later building.

The economic situation and the various architectural styles of the interwar are reviewed, as is the postwar development of the district which is described to give the post-World War Two context. Suburbs are more complex than is apparent at first consideration and this study aims to unpick the fabric of suburbia through the case study of a selected area of Patcham setting it all in the wider context of local and national issues. The patterns of building that are recorded for Patcham can be seen to operate across Britain in the same period and serve as an exemplar of wider processes.



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## Abbreviations

BBC	Brighton Borough Council
BG	Brighton Gazette
BHBC	Brighton & Hove Building Control
BHH	Brighton & Hove Herald
CAE	Carden Avenue Estate
ER	electoral roll
ESRO	East Sussex Record office
HHE	Hassocks Home Estate
LME	Ladies Mile Estate
MOH	Medical Officer of Health
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
OME	Old Mill Estate
SCM	Sussex County Magazine
SERDC	Steving East Rural District Council
WSRO	West Sussex Record Office

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Muriel Elms who grew up in 1920s Patcham, later moving to the Ladies Mile Estate has been a long standing contributor to my researches. Many Patcham residents, past and present, have provided oral information which has fed into the research process. Outside Patcham, information on contemporary interwar suburban estates came from Alan Deakin for Hasler Seaside Estate Lancing, John Hammond for Hassocks Garden Estate, Peter Mercer for Woodingdean and Stanley Bernard for Peacehaven. Historic farming background was supplied by Chris Passmore, Ron Harrington, Peter Wells and Bob Spencer. Brighton's interwar business community was outlined from each end of the spectrum by Bernard Johnson late of Johnson Brothers department store and the Misses Diplock of Diplock's Yard handcart hire.

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dug out scores of paper based documents and microfiche records to assist me. The archivists of the Construction History Society at Ascot similarly provided support and material. Evelyn Dodds, Geography Resources Centre, University of Sussex for cartographic advice.

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## **Dedication**

To my partner Barbara Pond who has put up with reams of paper and piles of books hiding surfaces all over the house and has kept me on the straight and narrow path of research and writing, through the Groves of Academe.



## Chapter 1

## Introduction

## 1.1 Methods, approaches and critical review

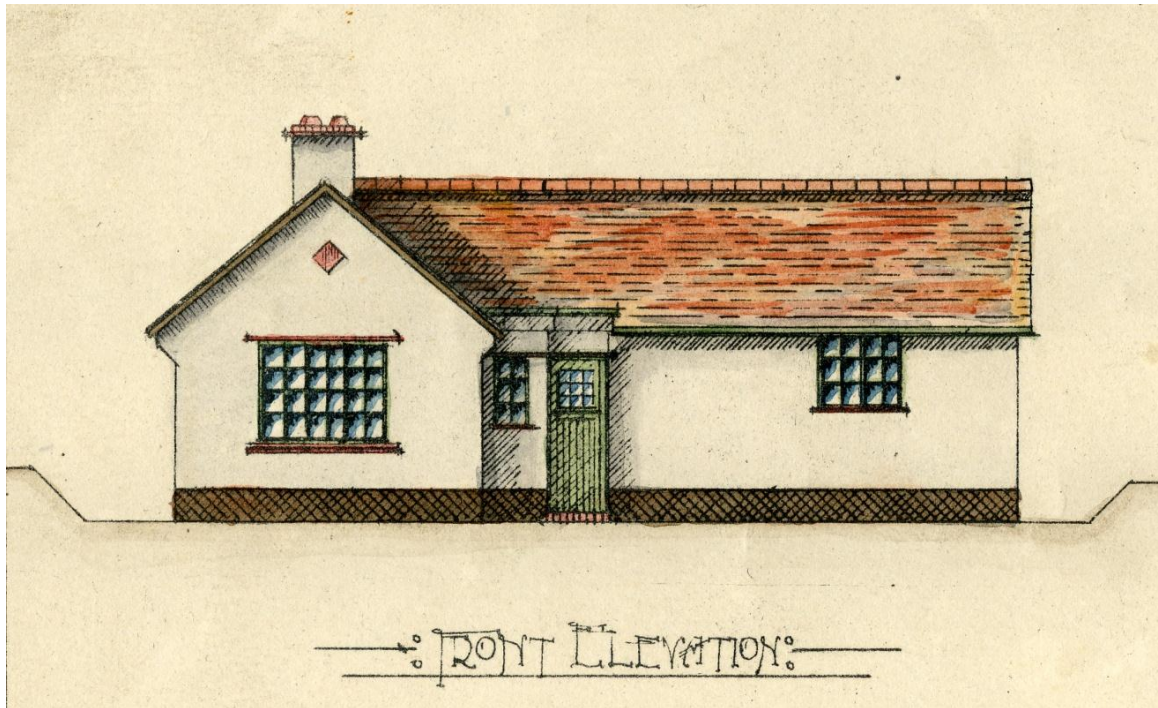


Fig 1

‘The Patch’ Bendigo estate, London Road, Patcham 1922

Source: ESRO

‘July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1922. Proposed bungalow for Mr. F.C.Gourlay’<sup>1</sup>

The architect’s plans for a ribbon-development bungalow on the furthest fringe of Patcham reveal a constant of suburban style; as noted by Muthesius in 1904 -

*‘The Englishman builds his house for himself alone.  
He feels no urge to impress...’*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ESRO DB/D57/211/L/02 submitted plans

<sup>2</sup> Muthesius H (1904) *Das Englische haus* (translated Seligman J ed.Sharp D 1979) p10

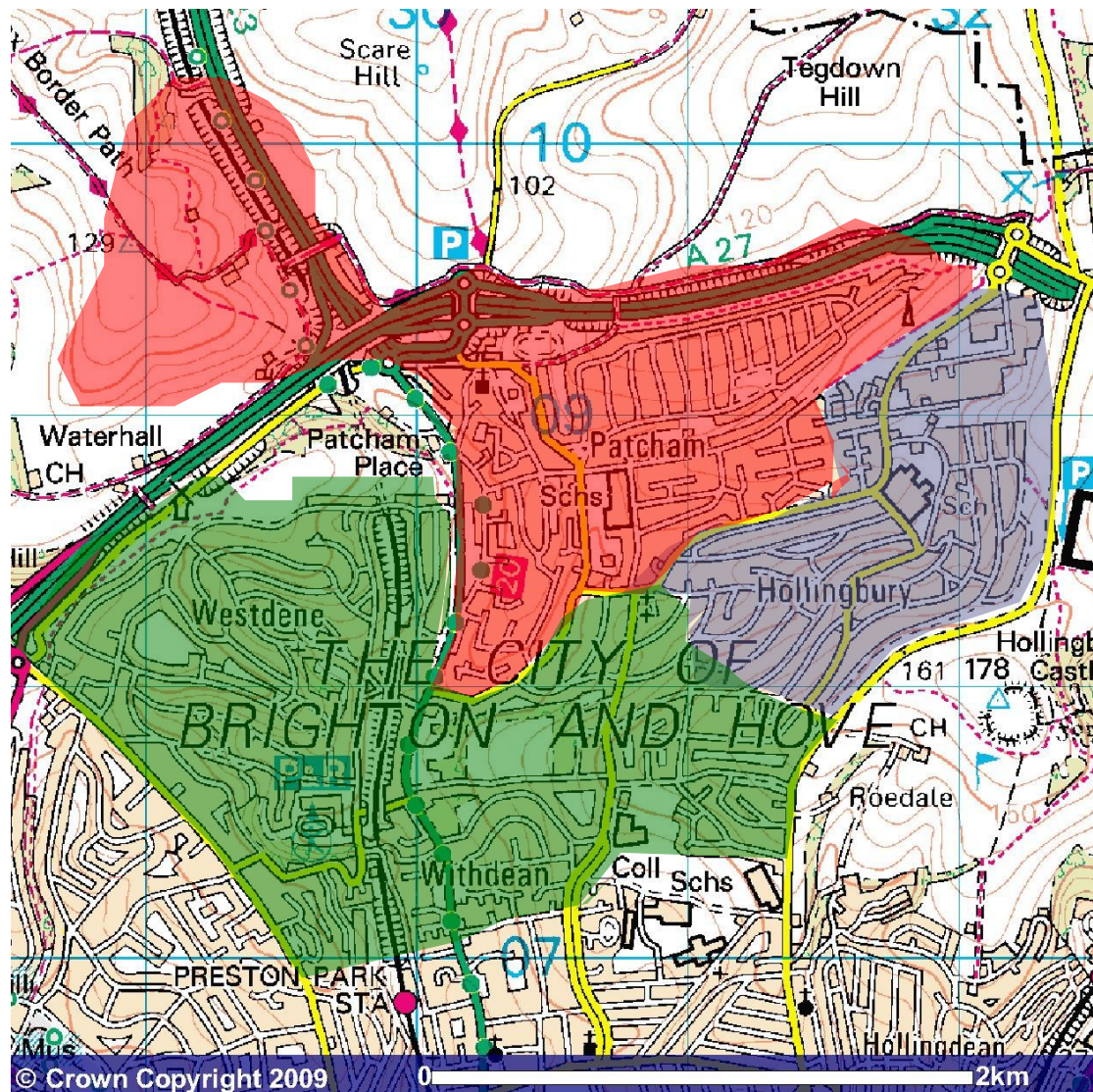


Fig 2

Patcham core and periphery areas

Source: Ordnance Survey<sup>3</sup>

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Red-core interwar housing

Green-private housing [inter and postwar]

Blue-local authority post-war

<sup>3</sup> Get-a-Map .Accessed 10.12.2009

Fig 3  
Patcham core housing area - detail  
Source: Ordnance Survey<sup>4</sup>  
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I am a child of the suburbs. I was born in 1949 and lived for 32 years in a terraced house built in 1882 in the Brighton suburb of Preston Park n area annexed by the resort in 1873.<sup>5</sup> My mother was born in a London suburb, in a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century house at Weymouth Terrace, Hackney; my father was born in an early 20<sup>th</sup> century detached house in Reynolds Avenue (now Valley Drive) Withdean, Patcham, at that time the suburban fringe of Brighton; a house with the truly suburban name of *'The Lilacs'*. In my lifecycle movements I have successively lived in the 1882 suburban terrace in Dyke Road Drive; a 1939 suburban bungalow in Ladies Mile Road, Patcham; a 1908 redbrick Edwardian suburban terrace, Hollingbury Park Avenue at the Fiveways, Preston; and latterly a 1947 ex-council, semi-detached house in the postwar suburb of Hollingbury, Patcham at Hartfield Avenue. The very road names of my housing history carry suggestions of the rustic county and evoke wider and deeper perceptions in the public consciousness than the bricks and mortar of the Brighton urban fringe. Dyke Road Drive takes its name from the route to the Devil's Dyke. Dyke Road is lined with large Edwardian and later villas and stretches out north from the resort to the viewpoint of Devils Dyke, a 712 ft. eminence on the South Downs. Ladies Mile Road is a genteel suburban renaming of the former Patcham Drove, the old cattle and sheep road from the village to Lewes market. Hollingbury Park Avenue lies adjacent to the old municipal golf course and beech woods of Hollingbury Park and Hollingbury itself is an Iron Age hill fort still standing atop and aloof from the urban sprawl that laps its slopes. My final address at Hartfield Avenue takes its name from the rural High Weald parish on the northern slopes of Ashdown Forest; the surrounding roads on the Hollingbury estate all having Sussex rural parish names, as in Lyminster Avenue, Buxted Rise, Denton Drive and Fernhurst Crescent.

All these street names bring the idea of the bucolic idyll into the urban fringe and set up

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<sup>4</sup> Get-a-Map accessed 10.12.09

<sup>5</sup> Carder T(1990) *Encyclopaedia of Brighton* 130a

the suburb as the arena for conflicting values and aspirations; a rural dream but one with an urbanized reality. It was while surveying the view from the 1939 bungalow that I was inspired to research my, then, neighbouring area - Ladies Mile Estate - for a short paper submitted on a 10 week University of Sussex class in 1982; that sparked an interest that eventually was channelled into research for a master's degree and latterly for this thesis.

The area chosen for the research was selected using a number of criteria; it needed to be relatively compact to obviate logistical problems in assembling data, all the while giving a broad spectrum of housing types in the period. The boundaries of the district chosen form a rough triangle of 54 streets with some outlying housing; bordered in the north by the line of the A27 Brighton by-pass from its junction with Carden Avenue at Old Boat Corner in the east, to its junction with the A23 London Road in the west, from this point the line runs south along the east side of the London Road to its junction with the west end of Carden Avenue, which is then followed easterly back to the top of the road at the A27. Two areas lie adjacent to, but outside that triangle; one is the area of Sweet Hill and Bendigo estates, north west of the old village, this has been included as it is an example of a short lived 'shack and track' development that is the subject of a personal memoir referred to previously. The other area is the south side of Carden Avenue from London Road east to Wilmington Way, as it is an example of the opposite end of the housing spectrum from Sweet Hill, being architect designed largely detached dwellings, for which ESRO holds many of the original plans. Fortuitously much of the area under study for this thesis can be viewed from my top floor landing window! The suburban backdrop to 20 years of my residence on the hill above Patcham.

An early desire in undertaking this work was to dispel the oft-prevalent view of the suburb as being anonymous, bland, dull, boring, mediocre, unappealing; housing seen as 'little boxes' with no character, no distinction, no distinctiveness; suburbia. It has been an aim of this work to view the suburb as a discrete district with each street different to the next, each dwelling its own character, each inhabitant an individual; a landscape of infinite individuality and detail. Whilst noting that the suburb is a collection of fine detail, at the same time it must be seen that the suburb is also subject to the wider externalities directed by international and national events, by state and local government policies, by



the serendipity of landownership, and land sales. It is this amalgam of scale that may be discerned throughout the study of suburbia, the generalities seen at the micro-level, the individual plots, and the planned avenues of family homes, being manifestations of shifts in agricultural economy, in legislation and of changing financial conditions.

The period chosen to research was facilitated by the convenience of the two decade period between the wars, although reference is made to the period prior to 1918 to give the setting of the interwar pattern; here mention is made to local urban conditions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a driver factor in the later urban expansion of Brighton. In the late 1940s there was substantial council housing stock (including my own house) added to the east of the study area in Hollingbury. Similarly, to the west in the 1950s and 1960s the Westdene estate developed as private housing, and blocks of flats appeared along the London Road valley. All these latter areas are outside both the areal and time limits of this study, but references are made to both the pre-and post-dates to give context.

The literature surrounding suburbs is of a diverse nature and spans the spectrum from abstract urban location theories such as those of the Chicago School of the 1920s, the 1930s work of Hoyt and the post-Second World War studies of Harris and Ullman; through historical accounts such as the work of Dyos on Camberwell, to the purely local history work which in the context of this study of Patcham is exemplified by Farrant (latterly Berry) and Montford et al. Of particular interest in this research has been how the academic perception and study of the suburb has changed over time, and how the writings that form key works in the discipline have reflected these evolving themes. There has been a marked change in the way that suburban history, especially 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban history, has been recorded or studied, indeed in many examples of British historical accounts the suburb is marked by its absence. A key figure in the history of landscape change, indeed for some historical geographers the key figure, is WG Hoskins, whose 1955 publication *The making of the English landscape* is in Hoskins' own words 'a pioneer study'; Hoskins however took a jaundiced view of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although the penultimate chapter 'The landscape of towns' comments -

'After all, suburbs have a very respectable antiquity. They were well developed

outside the walls of many English towns by the thirteenth century...' <sup>6</sup>

There is less understanding of later suburban growth, as the final paragraph notes -

'...one can forget for a while the noisy onward march of science, and settle down to meditate upon the civilized past.'<sup>7</sup>

Hoskins' chapter 'The landscape today' continues from its predecessor -

'...since the year 1914, every single change in the English landscape has either uglified it or destroyed its meaning or both...it is a distasteful subject but it must be faced for a few moments'<sup>8</sup>

To illustrate this he reels off a list of post Second World War 'ills' from prefabs to atom-bombers, the arterial by-pass to electric fence.<sup>9</sup> The cover of the 1970 Pelican reprint can be seen as confirming his view; the trio of landscape images employed to show the enduring pattern of the English landscape are in ascending order, a 'natural' landscape of woods, copses and grassland overlain with a 'human' landscape of small fields, route-ways and depleted woodland, this in turn has hovering over the earlier patterns a heavily built-up urban landscape, streets of housing, blocks of flats and industrial units. Above the latter the cover is all black, perhaps reflecting Hoskins idea of the succession? Little had changed over a decade later where in *Fieldwork in local history* he suggested students record the changes that had taken place in their local urban landscape and -

'...should aim at producing a photographic record of every road and street built before 1914...' <sup>10</sup>

Thus in the eye of Hoskins the great bulk of the area under study for this research would not only go under-recorded in that photographic archive, but following his earlier pronouncements, the post 1914 landscape of Patcham would have been ignored or - even as Hoskins has done – reviled. Yet as this work will demonstrate, far from Hoskins predictions, a great deal of the earlier landscape pattern is still readily discernible.

Another influential writer, Alan Everitt, published '*Ways and means in local history*' in

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<sup>6</sup> Hoskins WG (1955) *The making of the English landscape* p293

<sup>7</sup> Hoskins p297

<sup>8</sup> Hoskins p298

<sup>9</sup> Hoskins p299

<sup>10</sup> Hoskins WG (1967) *Fieldwork in local history* p67

1971; at the outset he acknowledges the work of HPR Finberg in the attention then being paid - '... to the study of the local community and the development of the local landscape.'<sup>11</sup> His notion of local did not extend into the local history of the contemporary, although noting in his conclusion that -

'The study of local history in England is rapidly expanding, in its techniques, its ideas and its subject matter.'<sup>12</sup>

Everitt's view, though not as disparaging as Hoskins' - he acknowledges the existence of the later suburb albeit in a cursory form - is similar in the view of the 20<sup>th</sup> century suburb, the bulk of the study area of Patcham. In spite of his quoting Finberg - '...the study of the local community and the development of the local landscape' there is little contact with the local after the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, so while there is much of interest in the landscape of early Patcham it would ignore the landscapes of the following 200 years.<sup>13</sup>

Everitt however, though not following Hoskins' disdain for the landscape history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, never brings the topic of towns even into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a caveat to his early pronouncements he does make the point that -

'...we are, so to speak pushing back the frontiers of colonization and reclaiming the uncultivated tracts of history as our own.'<sup>14</sup>

This reference to '...frontiers of colonization...' is certainly an apt description of some of Patcham's interwar areas of 'track and shack'; later references in this thesis in chapter five illustrate the frontier aspects of the suburban fringe, out on Sweet Hill in particular. Research for this thesis has found that large areas of 'uncultivated tracts' are to be found close to major urban centres, in the form of 20<sup>th</sup> century suburbs.

Alan Rogers writing in his 1972 '*Approaches to local history*' similarly keeps assiduously to the period before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although he does briefly acknowledge the existence of the suburb in his section on 19<sup>th</sup> century 'Housing and the community'. In this he noted the effect of urban transport systems in creating a low density zone of houses standing in their own gardens, in contrast to the increasingly cramped conditions

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<sup>11</sup> Everitt A (1971) *Ways and means in local history* p5

<sup>12</sup> Everitt p50

<sup>13</sup> Everitt p50

<sup>14</sup> Everitt p50

of the inner-city. The spread of early suburban villas that linked the Brighton fringe of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the village of Patcham was enabled by the spread of the local horse-bus network along the London Road valley.<sup>15</sup> A similar approach had been taken a year later with the publication of *Man made the land* edited by Baker and Harley; their final chapter, written by David Ward - *Living in Victorian town* - deals with the social segregation brought about by urban expansion and better commuting facilities, the effect of upper class suburban areas creating a concentration of inner urban poverty.<sup>16</sup> These issues of increasingly polarized urban populations were ones that were commented on by the Brighton Medical Officer of Health of the period where he noted in 1894 that -

‘...that one of the most desirable objects for Brighton is the extension of its municipal borders and the encouragement of artisans’ dwellings in the outskirts of the town with cheap means of communication.’<sup>17</sup>

This presaged the era of mass council house building that came immediately after the First World War, with estates such as Becontree for London County Council and at Moulsecoomb for Brighton Borough Council - although both examples were constructed on land far out of the local administrative boundaries.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the suburb appeared to be lost in a local history void, where there is a substantial body of literature on the history of the city, and in line with Hoskins, even more on the background to the landscape history of rural communities; the suburb barely receives an acknowledgement of interest, in spite of the vast majority of the UK population living in the area outside the central city or in a rural fastness. As interest in the topic of the local grew, with a noticeable increase in adult education extra-mural classes in the study of the locale, so the amount of literature similarly grew. Richardson’s *Local history encyclopedia* (1974) though - ‘...an invaluable aid to individual and group projects.’<sup>18</sup> is lacking in any but a scant mention of housing that is not either rural/agricultural or urban/philanthropic. A couple of mentions of parliamentary acts on social housing provision aside, a researcher would be forgiven in thinking that suburbs did not exist in the local history context. In the final quarter of the

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<sup>15</sup> Peasgood A(1985) *The horse buses of Brighton and Hove* p9

<sup>16</sup> Baker ARH and Harley JB eds (1973) *Man made the land* p203

<sup>17</sup> Brighton Medical Officer of Health.(1894) *Annual report* p10

<sup>18</sup> Richardson J (1974) *The local historian’s encyclopaedia*. Dust jacket.



20<sup>th</sup> century within the area of adult education classes organized by the Centre for Continuing Education, University of Sussex, the publications created from local history classes had little or no 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban element. Published work on historic urban Brighton, three publications; the market town of Hailsham, rural medieval Wadhurst, industrial Burgess Hill, Victorian Hove, Victorian Crawley and Edwardian Seaford, all contributed to the local history canon with little mention of any suburban element. One on the birth of Crawley New Town is the sole champion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century suburb.

An important source for informed comment on the suburb in the mid-1970s is not a standard published work, but the course books that accompanied the Open University course, *Arts: a third level course - History of architecture and design 1890-1939*.<sup>19</sup> These works, intended to be used in conjunction with Open University radio and television programmes, give a brief but well documented overview of some of the key points of the suburban built environment covering, amongst other topics, a survey of design 1915-1939, Modernism and the 'Moderne', the electric home, flats between the war in Britain and the Garden City. The recommended reading for these courses confirms the situation noted earlier in this section, that there was little in the way of direct reference to the suburb or its architecture, other than referral to the generic styles of earlier influential architects such as Philip Norman-Shaw or CFA Voysey.

CH Knowles' *Landscape history* (1983) a publication of the Historical Association, adopted a different tone; while acknowledging Hoskins' work as one of the founding fathers of landscape studies, Knowles delves deeper into the topic noting that -

'Each generation has left its mark on the landscape, adding new features of its own, and modifying or erasing those it has inherited from the past. The aim of the landscape historian, therefore, is to disentangle the different elements in this intricate, ever-changing pattern, and to establish how, why and when each came to be added - or removed.'<sup>20</sup>

This has certainly been the intention of this study, to seek out the - 'modifying or erasing' elements in the 21<sup>st</sup> century suburban landscape of Patcham. Knowles laid out his slim

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<sup>19</sup>Open University(1972) *Art :a third level course-History of architecture and design 1890-1939 units19-24*

<sup>20</sup> Knowles CH (1983) *Landscape history* p5

volume in the order - present, past and future landscapes; in the present he notes the impress on the landscape of 'the English Village', both those extant and those that have shrunk or have been deserted. Surprisingly - but welcome all the same - is the leap in the following paragraph to 'the Meaning of High Rise Housing' which Knowles sets in context to the previous era of housing - 'the Suburb'. Although only 16 lines it is a token of the changing nature of local study that the settlement pattern of - '...semi-detached housing, spreading suburbia...' merits a mention in a monograph of landscape history, but probably more remarkable to acknowledge the impact of the high rise flats as a feature of the urban landscape and settlement picture. Knowles' idea of disentangling the different elements of the modifying processes can certainly be illustrated with reference to Patcham where, for example, the fields formerly part of the Patcham Place estate, still reveal their earlier boundaries in street alignments, while the interior of those fields has been modified with avenues of 1930s buildings.

The nature of the local history canon was changing sufficiently by the late 1980s for Phythian-Adams to title his Leicester University publication - *'Rethinking English local history'* (1991). The emphasis at the start is on the relationship between 'national' and 'local' and the premise is based on the earlier writings of Finberg, work closely allied to that of Hoskins, in what Phythian-Adams refers to as the 'Leicester approaches'. Finberg used the terminology of - '...national history localized and local history *per se*'. The former - national themes at local levels - Finberg stated, was one that local historians should employ, coming to the subject well-grounded in the history of England. However as he was at pains to stress -

'The objects of local historical enquiry could thus be studied in their own rights and for their own sakes. The local societies in question did have distinctive histories deserving of individual attention...' <sup>21</sup>

And what could be more of a national picture than the widespread growth of urban fringes in the form of suburban housing estates that were appearing in a swathe of localities across the nation, the whole adding up to a national picture. Not only were the estates created in a similar time frame but the overall impression was of a similarity in the

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<sup>21</sup> Phythian-Adams C (1991) *Re-thinking English local history* p2

designs of the dwellings themselves, this is brought to light in chapter seven in relation to this research. These ideas from both Hoskins and Finberg linked to those of a contemporary, Maurice Beresford, who advocated - ‘...the biography of little places...’<sup>22</sup> as a pursuit quite distinct from that of national history. Hoskins, Finberg and Beresford were all instrumental in bringing local studies as contributions to a generalized view of English developments.<sup>23</sup> As Phythian-Adams contends later in the chapter this was - ‘A mode of expanding an historical theme from the particular to the general...’<sup>24</sup> The examples drawn upon in the opening section of *‘Rethinking...’* fall into the urban/rural continuum with emphasis on rural size or urban function, but the exemplars are all from pre-modern historical accounts, with no semblance of a 20<sup>th</sup> century discussion point around contemporary issues. Although the attempt to categorize settlements has some resonance with this work, in studying Patcham it became obvious that here were characteristics between neighbouring housing areas that needed deeper clarification.

Porter’s *‘Exploring urban history: sources for local historians’* (1990) would seem to be a potentially rich seam of study for the built environment, yet contains the barest of mentions of that largely 20<sup>th</sup> century urban form, the peripheral suburb. Porter records the suburb in respect of the growth of urban communities that absorbed rural communities and the occasional small town into - ‘...the urban mesh as suburbs or satellites of the expanding towns and cities...’ but little else of substance to advance the cause of the 20<sup>th</sup> century suburb in historical writings. It is all the more disappointing, as several of the sources Porter employs to illustrate historic urban areas, are ones utilized in this research on a suburb; tithe surveys and maps provided evidence of 21<sup>st</sup> century street and place names, 18<sup>th</sup> century estate maps showed the shape of fields directing the pattern of the present built area. Local newspapers recorded within their news and editorial articles, advertisements and letters the growth of suburbia and the public concerns around that development. Porter’s phrase - ‘suburbs or satellites of the expanding towns’ - is certainly akin to the role of Patcham in Brighton’s urban expansion; initially a satellite, an agricultural village with Victorian villas, by the 1920s it had become a suburb linked by a

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<sup>22</sup> Phythian-Adams p3

<sup>23</sup> Phythian-Adams p3

<sup>24</sup> Phythian Adams p5

chain of diverse housing to the resort.<sup>25</sup>

*'English local history: an introduction'* by Kate Tiller (1992) starts with a more positive note and one that has direct relevance to this research -

‘...local history is primarily about the origin and growth of community, about how, why and when local communities changed...’<sup>26</sup>

The chapter *'Traditional into modern? local life c1750-1914'* opens with a paragraph outlining some of the major influences of the period, especially -

‘...the transition from a rural, primarily agrarian and traditional society to a modern, primarily industrial and urban existence.’

This encapsulates the position of Patcham in this research where a short time span saw the village change from a supplier of agricultural commodities into Brighton, to one of a densely populated suburban district of semi-detached bungalows, shopping parades and roadhouse hotels. The impact of national events seen at the local level is brought out along with the understanding of the interaction between local circumstances and wider factors which together produced the particular local experience.<sup>27</sup> Population growth was differential and throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century the urban growth that was such a feature of the period can be seen to affect communities in different ways; Tiller notes that along with the population growth in industrial communities such as Middlesbrough -

‘...other booming towns were the pleasure resorts...perhaps the most striking growths were in suburbs and satellite towns.’<sup>28</sup>

Patcham, as a suburb of a major pleasure resort can be seen as meeting both the above conditions, as it can with the assertion that agriculture was responding to increased urban demand. Tiller’s conclusion noted -

‘Local history continues to be made in the 20<sup>th</sup> century ... much less recorded or written about than for earlier periods...this relative neglect is unfortunate.’<sup>29</sup>

This is a situation that applies to this research and which this thesis seeks to alleviate.

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<sup>25</sup> Porter S (1990) *Exploring urban history* p10

<sup>26</sup> Tiller K (1992) *English local history: an introduction* p1

<sup>27</sup> Tiller p171

<sup>28</sup> Tiller p179

<sup>29</sup> Tiller p234

Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a different emphasis became apparent in the treatment of suburbia in historical writings; *The Oxford companion to local and family history*, ed. David Hey 1995, actually has 'suburbs' as an entry in its A-Z format. This entry notes that suburbs originally were for 'poor immigrants' but later were the home to 'the middle classes'; listing a range of publications dealing with greater London suburbs. The passage goes on to observe -

'Relatively few studies have been made on the growth of middle-class suburbs on the edge of provincial towns.'<sup>30</sup>

This is exactly the position that relates to Patcham, as though there are many publications relating to the suburbs of London and Birmingham reflecting their population size, smaller communities have little written material to draw upon. Hey adds the important, but oft forgotten point, that there is working class housing in both town centres and the suburbs. The passage briefly lists some of the features of suburban growth, increased car and public transport usage, ribbon-development, planned and un-planned housing spreads, leading to garden city schemes and green belt policies.

In a similar vein, Evelyn Lord's 1999 '*Investigating the 20<sup>th</sup> century: sources for local historians*' deals with a period when suburban growth was a major feature that deserved the attention of both landscape and local historians. The first paragraph of the preface has much resonance for this particular study, stating -

'The historian of the future will look back at the twentieth century and see it as a century of great change. At the beginning of the 1900s Britain was on the brink of discovery, but the pace of life was slow. At the end of the century life is frenetic but exotic...discoveries...have changed the lives of ordinary people forever.'<sup>31</sup>

This thesis will show that far from the end of the twentieth century being 'frenetic and exotic', the period between the end of the First World War and the start of the Second - the span of this thesis - saw a similar contrast. The promotional material for the new Patcham housing estates could laud the effect of electricity in bringing modern domestic improvements from washing machines to the promise of television by the mid-1930s,<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Hey D (ed) (1995) *The Oxford companion to local and family history* p427

<sup>31</sup> Lord E (1999) *Investigating the 20<sup>th</sup> century: sources for local historians* p7

<sup>32</sup> 'Downland Homes by the Sea'. *Ladies Mile Estate brochure* (c1936?) p20

this was undoubtedly ‘frenetic but exotic.’ Lord’s chapter on housing emphasizes the inferior nature of much of Britain’s housing and the campaigns to both clear slums and provide council housing.<sup>33</sup> Lord’s exemplars are from a variety of census return statistics looking at comparisons of home ownership and house types linked to the use of local government records of housing committees and health reports. These latter records proved invaluable in the compilation of statistics on Brighton borough housing, but especially revealing in the personal comments of the Medical Officer of Health in regard to housing conditions in both the town centre and the suburbs. Lord’s survey is a particularly detailed account and one that provides extensive scope for investigation.

At the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the suburb, or more particularly the 20<sup>th</sup> century suburb, has gained an emphasis in studies of historic urban life. *The English urban landscape* edited by Philip Waller (2000) devotes a chapter-‘Slums and suburbs: the persistence of residential apartheid’- to the topic, with a cameo on ‘The garden city’ by Olechnowicz within the body of the chapter. At odds to Hoskins 45 years earlier, the chapter carries the story of the suburbs through to wartime prefabs and postwar ‘Streets in the sky’.<sup>34</sup>

The early years of the 21st century has brought a new emphasis to the study of local communities, however changing funding and educational policy has seen one of the success stories of the later twentieth century all but disappear; the work of local studies research and publishing groups emanating from university extra-mural classes. This aspect of local history and landscape has been covered by Sheeran and Sheeran in a *Local Historian* issue. The point they raise at the start of their article is one that has been explored throughout this chapter -

‘The history of knowledge demonstrates that disciplines and subjects of study are not pre-existing entities, but over time emerge, change in character or disappear.’<sup>35</sup>

This has certainly been the case with the local studies in the Brighton area with publications appearing in the early 1970s, expanding the geographical and historical

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<sup>33</sup> Lord p35

<sup>34</sup> Waller P (ed) (2000) *The English urban landscape* Oxford University Press p233-268

<sup>35</sup> Sheeran G and Sheeran Y (2009) ‘Opinion: “No longer the 1948 show”- local history in the 21<sup>st</sup> century’ *The Local Historian* v39 n4 p314

spread in the 1980s and disappearing by the end of the century. Their conclusion on the current debate in local history as taught through universities, is that no matter what political party is in government and funding such adult education classes as we have had them in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the funding will not be found for -

‘...a subject area that does not align with the policies that they wish to see in operation. Academic local history will have to find a role, a justification, in terms of the twenty-first century mainstream university curriculum, and popular local history will need to address some of the issues we have raised to survive as more than an arcane pastime.’<sup>36</sup>

The interest shown by the Patcham local community in the material researched for this thesis is testament to its perceived value away from the ‘Groves of Academe’ and the lessening of accessibility to the processes of such research must be seen as detrimental.

How these various approaches can be observed in this study of suburban growth is now considered in relation to the study area of Patcham. In 1955 Hoskins’ view of the suburb as having nothing significant to add to landscape history since 1914, ignored the facts of the previous 40 years; far from his statement that ‘modern life’ has all but obliterated the pattern of the past, this thesis will seek to show that far from this gloomy view, the 21<sup>st</sup> century suburban landscape of Patcham shows evidence of a wide range of historic landscape features, showing the evolution of the present out of the past. At a very simple level the 21<sup>st</sup> century street map of Patcham can be laid over a 1750 Abergavenny estate map or a Paine estate map of 1811 and the pattern of suburban streets fits remarkably well into the earlier field boundaries. The landholdings of the three main 19<sup>th</sup> century landowners - Abergavenny, Paine and Curwen - correlate to 20<sup>th</sup> century housing areas; differential development delineated in ancient land boundaries; features in the form of hedge lines, tree belts and dry valley bottoms, seep through the later human developments as they dictate road directions and curves, housing estate shapes and footpath routes. Place names and street names show a concordance with appellations from the 1842 Tithe Survey and indeed from earlier estate plans. Hoskins’ view of ‘modern’ landscape obliterating earlier features is far from the case in Patcham. The continuity and change evident in the parish landscape history reveals a wealth of

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<sup>36</sup> Sheeran and Sheeran p322-3

landscape detail that is hidden in the received wisdom of suburban anonymity. The understanding of this more complicated pattern of diversity gives added perspective to the wider picture of suburban development.

This theme of scant reference to ‘modern’ landscape change runs as a thread through the writings of local history where the emphasis is one of strictly urban issues, often of urban poverty and social segregation; or of purely rural issues, with the growth of the suburb in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries - the period of major growth in Patcham - seen as a threat to the rural, rather than as a social movement promising better living conditions for the urban masses. The key themes of this research are ones that have concerned me for many years undertaking research into the suburban landscape; *Continuity and Change* is a theme of landscape studies that can be clearly discerned throughout this thesis; a tightly woven mesh of geographic and social factors that have shaped the suburban landscape as surely as the more observed rural and urban scenes. *Diversity* - a theme at variance to the received popular image of the suburb, where homogeneity is seen as a norm, comes across strongly with a walk along any suburban avenue, diversity in design, materials, colour schemes, adaptations and personal adornments. Each suburban landscape undergoes a *Lifecycle* whereby agricultural land is developed as housing, that housing ages and is either renovated or replaced, changing technologies and fashions effect change unforeseen in the original schemes. A 21st century manifestation of this latter is the loss of front gardens for parking, denying wildlife a home and creating problems in rainwater runoff and ground absorption, the size of 1930s roadways obviates curbside parking in many thoroughfares. Finally *Perspective* is considered, the overall role of the suburb both in the physical structure of the city and in its economic and social landscapes.

## 1.2

### Greater Brighton topographical literature

For the purposes of this section much attention has been paid to the distribution and history of the suburban areas around Brighton, both the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century suburbs of



the resort boom years and the 20<sup>th</sup> century public and private developments, in order to facilitate comparison between the study area and its local and regional environs. All literature cited here will be found in the bibliography. General accounts of the Greater Brighton suburbs are given in histories of the area such as Gilbert's *Old ocean's bauble* (1954) or former chief planning officer, Ken Fines' *History of Brighton and Hove* (2002.) Farrant's *Growth of Brighton and Hove 1840-1939* (1981) takes a more limited period, but one crucial to the area under study. Pictorial information can be found in the collection of images in *A pictorial history of Brighton and Hove* by Beevers and Roles (1993) and in a more limited time frame *Brighton between the wars* by JS Gray (1976). A different approach is taken by Woodham in *Fact, fiction and fantasy: design in Brighton between the wars* (1994) in looking at the visual appearance of the resort and its surrounds. Bangs, *A freedom to roam guide to the Brighton downs* (2008) is a wide ranging look which has taken an alternative stance to the access issues on the surrounding Downland with vignettes of the urban fringe settlements.

The growth of the northern part of the borough in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century is recorded in Montford et al *The vanishing villas of Preston and Withdean* (1996) and *Preston; downland village to Brighton suburb* (2004). Peasgood noted the effect the burgeoning Victorian transport network had on the suburban growth pattern in *The horse buses of Brighton and Hove* (1985) which correlated the suburban spread with the accessibility of valley routes, and especially along the London Road valley, to the laden horse-buses, an important consideration in a hilly district such as Brighton. As the urban fringe spread outward, by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century a clear pattern emerged of a public/private divide in the geographical distribution of housing, and reminiscence of the former is contained in several of the QueenSpark oral history series. Dunn's *Moulsecoomb days* (1990) and Winter's *Moulsecoomb memories* (1998) both need to be read in conjunction with a contemporary account, *Rents in Moulsecoomb*, by Fitzgerald (1939) and Dickens' paper on 'Interwar housing policy: a study of Brighton' (1981) All of these are recording the large garden suburb of Moulsecoomb that Brighton planned on its north east fringe, a suburb noted by Lloyd in *Built Environment* (1974) -

‘the early municipal estates (at Moulsecoomb)... admirable examples of garden

suburbs, said to have been inspired by Sir Charles Reilly, who lived in retirement in Brighton and was a friend of a leading Councillor Sir Herbert Carden.<sup>37</sup>

Further out in the boroughs' 'east end' Whitehawk has been recorded by Netley, *Holy Oak: a history of Whitehawk and Manor Farm* (2002) and Bangs in *Whitehawk Hill: Where the turf meets the surf* (2004). An earlier account of the Whitehawk area is the compilation of accounts of the history of Whitehawk School for the 1984 golden jubilee. On the far eastern edges of the Brighton conurbation were the sprawling South Downs plotlands of Peacehaven and Woodingdean; although much has been written to revile the former, there is a growing awareness of the particular community aspect of Peacehaven, well captured in an older resident's account by Poplett in *Peacehaven: a pictorial history* (1993). Woodingdean, absorbed into Brighton in 1928 has two accounts both by Mercer and Holland *The Huns Mere Pit: the story of Woodingdean and Balsdean* (1993) and *Woodingdean, reflections and the millennium* (1999). Coates (2010) delves into the place-names - and house names - of Rottingdean, Ovingdean, Saltdean and Woodingdean. More formal suburban development occurred at nearby *Saltdean*; d'Enno (1985) in his volume of that name has provided a wealth of local detail both on the development and the earlier landscape. Rottingdean, the latter's western neighbour, and an agricultural village absorbed into Brighton Borough in 1928, has many history guides but little on its suburban growth, although paradoxically there is a considerable amount on this topic in Rottingdean contained in d'Enno, especially the Mock Tudor development at Dean Court which is the epitome of Thirties faux-vernacular and once the home of Hollywood star Bette Davis.

On the western fringe of the conurbation, in the adjoining county of West Sussex, on the River Adur's shingle bar and mudflats at Shoreham Beach, grew up a curious mixture of standard suburban housing, old railway carriage homes and relict maritime craft recycled as houseboats. The idiosyncratic bungalows which appeared here from the 1880s gave the community its earlier soubriquet, evoked by Wolters in his *Bungalow Town: theatre and film colony* (1985). Along with Simons' *Retired on the river* (nd 2005?) both these volumes capture the exotic nature of these particular littoral communities. The downland

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<sup>37</sup> Lloyd D (1974) Brighton beautiful *Built environment* v3n9 p470

suburban fringe of intervening Portslade is picked up in Green's *Portslade: a pictorial history* (1994) and various nostalgic pictorial booklets by Elliott (1979); the adjacent Hove suburb of Hangleton has an account by Laker (1991) but features in a pictorial history of *Hove* by Scott (1994). Hove itself, though an ancient settlement effectively becomes a suburb of Brighton during the 19<sup>th</sup> century; Scott (1994) also illustrates this. Pickering (1972) *The West Brighton estate* looks at the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Avenues area of Hove, and *Brunswick Town* by Middleton (2001), an early 19<sup>th</sup> century extension of Brighton. This latter area has been extensively researched by Ray in a range of articles, 'Who were the Brunswick commissioners?' (1989) being one such.

The older poor inner-urban districts, the suburbs of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century resort, have been extensively recorded with images and oral histories in several volumes of the QueenSpark series such as *Backyard Brighton* (1988), *Back Street Brighton* (1989) *Poverty, hardship but happiness* (1974) or *Hard work and no consideration* (1981). Later, more pictorial volumes in the Brighton books series are on *Hilly Laine*, by Jones and Pollard (1999) an area of later 19<sup>th</sup> century poor suburban housing now rapidly gentrifying, and *Churchill Square revisited: a lost Brighton Community* by Walker (2002), now submerged under a huge late 20<sup>th</sup> century shopping centre. Brighton is usually recorded as a haunt of the powerful and wealthy; however Hill's (1991) *Underdog Brighton* looks at another side of the resort and takes in much of the interwar poorer districts for its remit. An earlier publication by the QueenSpark Rates Book Group *Brighton on the rocks* (1983) also looked at the hidden nature of the resort's economy and in particular the problems created for the Brighton Council estates under a post-World War Two monetarist policy.

The north of the borough, both within the borders and across in neighbouring administrative districts had seen much Victorian suburban growth particularly in the tree lined streets of Preston Park and Withdean (see Montford et al above). The Downland slopes rising from the London Road valley in the parish of Preston were developed by the Stanford estate, a topic covered in general by Farrant et al (1981); and more specifically, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century terraces surrounding Blaker's Park were chronicled by Pollard and

Apps (1993). A previously ignored Brighton suburban community at Hollingdean to the north of the central valley has a history compiled by Carter as part of a school reminiscence group in the *History of Hollingdean* (1987). Adjacent to Hollingdean is the Roundhill area, a largely 19<sup>th</sup> century urban fringe, where housing mixed with hunt kennels, rubbish dumps, laundries and market gardens; its history has been covered by local residents in *Rose Hill to Round Hill* (2004). Little has appeared on Patcham itself; Farrant (1981) noted its growth patterns as part of the resort's interwar growth, in more detail she took the 19<sup>th</sup> century growth and analysed it as part of an adult education group *Changes in Brighton and Hove's suburbs: Preston and Patcham 1841-1871* (1985). Ryman and Mead's *Glimpses of old Patcham* (1992) is a collection of mainly period postcard images with a limited text; *The golden jubilee of Patcham junior school* (1987) is a compilation of reminiscence and log-book extracts which contain some useful local detail. Ambrose (1994) *Urban process and power* refers to the Ladies Mile Estate, and its creation and attendant services, in his chapter 'Profit-seeking development for sale'. He had used the area in an earlier work (1986) again utilising the building firm of George Ferguson as an exemplar. Ambrose' observations on the housing situation are similar to those of Bettington nearly 60 years earlier - 'No matter how many houses have been built we may take it that generally the problem is still as acute as ever'<sup>38</sup>

### 1.3

#### Archival sources

The methodology of the research was set around several strands of approach - archival sources, published material, oral history accounts and fieldwork. The archival sources employed were initially those of East Sussex Record Office (ESRO) and the Brighton History Centre; ESRO in particular having a little used collection of architects' original coloured plans for the housing that started to appear in the early 1920s. The policy of ESRO in not allowing personal digital photography of documents or plans was a constraint on the amount of material that could be accessed on archival visits; essential plans were copied by ESRO in a digital form at considerable expense. The catalogues at

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<sup>38</sup> Bettington EJ (1929) The housing problem *Journal of the faculty of architects and surveyors* v1 p135

ESRO revealed some useful local council minutes; however a set of parish records for the early 1920s had suffered damage by damp, and although the document in question was produced for study there were strict guidelines on how much, of what was a crucial volume, could be accessed and viewed.

As a result of municipal boundary changes in the 1927 expansion of Brighton borough, the archive of material relating to Patcham is split between two archival sources. The pre-1927 material is that of the previous authority for the area under study, Steyning East Rural District Council [SERDC] this is held at ESRO. Post-1927 the area became the responsibility of Brighton Borough Council, however changes to local authority boundaries in 1974 and at the creation of the Brighton and Hove unitary authority in 1996 have further complicated the situation; archival material is missing and in the case of much of the early plans for Brighton housing, destroyed, leaving blueprint plans on microfiche; buildings erected in the period under study but demolished since, have had their plans ‘weeded’ by Brighton planners leaving gaps in the paper record.

Brighton History Centre held a particularly important factual source, an almost complete 80-year run of the Brighton Medical Officer of Health (MOH) annual reports up to 1974, - two reports from the First World War are missing- which gave much detail on the borough housing conditions, numbers of new dwellings planned to be built and those actually built, throughout the study period. The MOH for the period under review, Duncan Forbes, and his predecessor Arthur Newsholme, gave detailed and personalized précis of Borough housing, revealing both officials as passionate in their belief of municipal responsibility for decent housing, a major factor of public health.

The microfilm archive of local newspapers held at Hove Library was used extensively to build up a collection of local news items and advertisements to give context and highlights to specific events and themes. Hove also revealed an unexpected source, discovered as a result of a meeting at Brighton and Hove Planning Department, when the Building Control manager gave access to the department file card system. This was a paper record of every extant property in the city with dated entries to every planning

decision, from the initial Building Control ‘permission to build’ through to each addition or alteration, be it coal shed, garage or ‘glazed enclosure’.

Having been given access to this on a weekly basis I was able to assemble a database of every existing property in my research area. The recording of this data was done under less than perfect conditions, being in a windowless archive room with minimal work space (the edge of a crowded table). Following on from this initial documentary recording, was the fact that each line of entry had a coded reference that linked to accompanying architect’s plans and blueprints on microfiche, these showed elevations and ground plans of structures, along with street plans for adjacent areas and properties (sometimes copious plans to each reference), many of which contained a wealth of construction and site detail. The viewing of these plans was undertaken at the single departmental fiche-viewer in the public area of the Building Control office, the viewer being shared with the general public whenever they requested its use. This put some constraint on the accurate transcribing and recording of the relevant information.

Unfortunately some of the listed plans were either missing or had been mis-filed; the move to Hove Town Hall from now demolished Brighton Council seafront premises, had resulted in much ‘rationalisation’ of holdings. As the requested fiches had to be located from a remote storage area and collated by the hard-pressed and short-staffed council workers before I could view them, there was some logistical difficulty in seeing all the material that I had hoped to view. Owing to work commitments and constraints on the time I had to access the archive, not all the material that I wanted could be viewed.

## 1.4

### Oral history

A tranche of research material was that gleaned from Patcham residents and their families, past and present in the form of interviews or personal letters, a most valuable and fruitful source but one that requires some caveats and explanations on my part. My initial foray into Patcham local history took place in 1982 and scant handwritten notes

were collected from a number of older residents, many of whom had settled in what was then the new housing in the 1920s and 1930s. These notes remained in a box file for many years until I resurrected them for this thesis. Tantalizingly there were gaps in the narrative where I had omitted to ask the questions then, that I needed answers to now! All of the original interviewees from 1982, with the exception of one lady, are now dead, so I have to use the original notes with no covering permissive letters. The later interviewees all gave permission to use their reminiscences and in some cases their personal archive, particularly their photo albums. Some of these interviews were taped; others were recorded in written note form. Often meeting one Patcham resident resulted in my being passed on to another and a network of contacts was created. Articles on my research appeared in the local press and on BBC local radio which led to more useful contacts.<sup>39</sup> As with all oral testimony caution had to be used in the acceptance of material as fact, after the gap of - initially - half a century, memory could play tricks, but by cross referencing to trade directories, local government records and other sources I was able to establish that most of the factual material was indeed accurate.

It should be stated here that the nature of the interviews were not in the form of the highly structured pro-forma of the modern oral historian or family history practitioner; some were recorded on a mini tape recorder, many were in the form of passing conversations at local history meetings or chance encounters. As I was known to many of the interviewees by dint of my (and my parents') long residence in the area I felt that an informal approach would lead to richer seams of information. In general I just asked those involved to comment on their earlier lives in Patcham with some prompting on my part as to aspects that I felt were important, such as their parents' employments or earlier habitations. With no concerted plan in conducting interviews it was of interest that I eventually interviewed a wide range of people who had experience of, or who were related to, those who had lived in the old Patcham village, the 1920s plotlands, the speculative dwellings of the late 1920s, the corporate estates and the local council estates.

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<sup>39</sup> *Pathways Magazine* Winter 2005 p4; *Bulletin* 27.1.2006 p5; *Evening Argus* 4.2.2006; BBC Southern Counties Radio 13.1.2006/24.2.2006

The value of this oral evidence is apparent from one example, that dealing with the Sweet Hill settlement which was largely based on two very different, but equally outstanding sources. Mr. Davis who had grown up on Sweet Hill in the early 1920s dictated his memories to Miss Edith Gorton in the 1990s; she kept the typed script and offered it to a local publishing house that turned it down. I heard of this source from anecdotal comments of elderly Patcham residents, and after much telephoning and enquiry I spoke to Miss Gorton on the phone and she sent me a copy of typed manuscript. A month later she had died aged over 90. Mr. Davis' account is a colourful depiction of a now lost world of life in the raw 'shack and track' settlement. As a counterpoint to this is the sole surviving Minute Book of SERDC that dates from summer 1921 to the end of 1923, this outlines in bureaucratic, municipal typed detail the monthly doings of the various committees that dealt with its domain, an area that included Sweet Hill, at a period exactly contemporary to Mr. Davis. The two linked sources reveal a previously little researched community. As with all evidence there has to be caution in its use, as memory and time plays tricks and often there is no archival or documentary source to verify statements in an oral history or a personally written memoir.

## 1.5

### Format

The format of this thesis is that after this introductory chapter, chapter two will be a review of the key literature; the published material contains a collection which was far larger than first was envisaged when this thesis was planned, and four key texts of the discipline have been reviewed. Established disciplines in geography, urban studies and history are employing the suburb more often, as a vehicle of study recognising the fact that suburbia is the home for the bulk of western urban populations. There has been an increased interest in the suburb as an area of study rather than just a vehicle for derisory fun; however this latter stance has engendered a host of comic characters in fiction and visual media that ranges as creations from Dickens, RS Surtees and the Grossmith



brothers<sup>40</sup>, through to radio and TV characters as varied as Tony Hancock in East Cheam, Tom Good of 'The Good Life' in Surbiton and the 'Desperate Housewives' of suburban Wisteria Lane. The more considered approach to suburbs is seen in the psycho-geographer Ian Sinclair's work on Greater London's outer suburbia, *London Orbital*. This approach has yet to move south from the M25 to cross the South Downs at Patcham. The historical background to the study area of Patcham will then be covered in chapter three, its agricultural roots, economy and subsequent agricultural decline, accompanied by nascent pre-World War One suburban growth. Chapter four deals with the preservationist concerns of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A key factor in the growth of 20<sup>th</sup> century suburbia was the appalling condition of many British inner-cities, a significant 'push' factor in the movement of urban populations to the urban fringe. These conditions had been created during the earlier period of rapid 19<sup>th</sup> century urban expansion. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Brighton, with its image as a sophisticated resort and its soubriquet- 'Dr Brighton'- actually had population figures that showed it to be the second most crowded borough after East Ham. The Brighton MOH reports depict some grim pictures of living conditions in the resort at that time. Along with concerns on urban poverty and squalid housing conditions, there came a movement to keep the rural areas near urban districts free from the burgeoning plotlands and areas of unplanned housing, a situation close to home in Brighton with the establishment and growth of several areas best described as 'landscapes of informal settlement'. Chapter five focuses these interwar concerns into the parish of Patcham where suburban growth, slow for the first decade after the First World War, became increasingly rapid in the 1930s. The initial period of growth was in the form of army huts and 'shack and track' development, followed by more formalised architect designed individual dwellings, all established on former agricultural holdings; the pattern of the fields recorded on an estate map of 1750 still readily discernible in the 21<sup>st</sup> century landscape.

Chapter six shows the abrupt change in the style and scale of suburban development after 1931, with the arrival of large developers in the parish and the subsequent massive

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<sup>37</sup>Dickens C (1848) *Dombey and Son*; Grossmith G and Grossmith W (1892) *The diary of a nobody*; Surtees RS (1853) *Mr. Sponges sporting tour*.

growth in housing numbers. This was a period which has left the British suburb as a strong image in the popular imagination, one of Suntrap windows and Sunburst gates, of stained glass door panels and half-timbered facades, of homes named *The Lilacs* or *Windmill View*. This theme is carried into chapters seven and eight where the varied architectural styles of the suburb, both exteriors and interiors are studied. Chapter nine takes a sideways glance at the Patcham that might have been, a place of thwarted dreams and unfulfilled developers schemes. Chapter ten draws the work to conclusion. The overall pattern is the larger picture of national policies carried down to a local level of discrete settlements, estates, streets, houses and rooms; this is exemplified in the story of the Scott family of Sweet Hill, Patcham which features in chapter four, a family whose travails are a microcosm of the chronic housing situation of the early post-World War One period. At a street level the pattern of earlier field boundaries has already been noted, but the pattern of landownership can be seen in the variety and style of the different housing estates developed by different builders at different times as land became available for development. The English Heritage document '*Suburbs and the Historic Environment*' outlines suggestions and proposals to incorporate the notion of suburbs having features that warrant attention, being integral to the contemporary urban fabric -

‘More than 8 out of 10 people in England live in suburban areas. Many of these areas are undergoing significant change...the most successful approach to planning, executing and managing change in our suburbs is one based on a sound understanding of local character, including its integral landscape’<sup>41</sup>

It is this change that this thesis seeks to document in an effort to better understand the process of suburban growth and continued adaptation to changing circumstance.

‘What is meant by the term suburb has been the subject of much analysis yet a consensus about a precise definition has never emerged. In general terms, suburbs can perhaps be best described as outgrowths or dependencies of larger settlements-somewhere with a clear relationship with a city and town but with its own distinct character.’<sup>42</sup>

The individuality of suburbs is a key point to this research, where neighbouring housing areas have quite distinct personalities and the unraveling of the suburban history behind

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<sup>41</sup> English Heritage (2007) *Historic environment local management(HELM): Suburbs and the historic environment* p1

<sup>42</sup> English Heritage *HELM* p1

this distinctiveness forms a core to the whole work. More particularly this individuality will be seen in operation in the research area of Patcham where each dwelling is different from its neighbour, each avenue and close has its own persona. Collectively, streets of any suburb can find themselves as distinct sub-groups or estates, their appearance and distribution dictated by a mesh of social and economic factors. A collection of such estates creating a suburb will be seen as discrete from a neighbouring suburb. In Patcham it is a solecism to confuse Hollingbury (where I live) with the former village, especially by occupants of the latter. The boundary between the two housing areas is much debated and hotly contested, but to an outsider (even from 4 miles distant Brighton) the differences appear negligible; in these suburbs Patcham implies the flint village and Patcham Place parkland, Hollingbury denotes 'Council Estate'. Thus is the local 'spirit of place' evoked.

## Chapter 2

## Interwar suburbia - literature review

*'Dwell I but in the suburbs  
Of your good pleasure?*

Shakespeare<sup>43</sup>



Fig 4

Ladies Mile Estate and the South Downs. View north from Hollingbury to Braeside Ave  
Source: author's own image 6.2.2008

*'Patcham...in a vastly improving district, a modern built freehold villa £600'*<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Shakespeare W (1599) *Julius Caesar* act 2 sc 1 L 285

<sup>44</sup> *Brighton and Hove Herald* 4.4.1931

## 2.1

## Key literature on the suburbs

Having outlined the general supporting literature on the suburbs and on Brighton's suburban growth, this chapter will now focus on the contribution made by some key texts. For the purposes of this review a number of more recent texts have been identified and analysed for their relevance to the area under scrutiny, three key periods have been identified in Patcham's interwar suburban growth and for each of these periods one particular piece of research has been chosen to exemplify where Patcham fits, or not, the main criteria outlined. These texts are - for the early post-war plotland stage - Hardy and Ward, *Arcadia for All; the legacy of a makeshift landscape* for the overlapping but longer period of speculative dwellings - King, *The Bungalow*; and for the stage of corporate estates, Oliver et al *Dunroamin' the suburban semi and its enemies*. Overseeing all, the work of Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* encapsulates a wide range of approaches. Latterly, the notion of the suburb as an area of geographical investigation has received the attention of a number of publications, prominent amongst them being Iain Sinclair's *London Orbital*, a journey around the M25 into a Britain of the fringes, a similar urban location to that in the 2011 publication '*Edgelands*' by Farley and Symmons-Roberts, where the authors have researched the chain of container yards and retail parks, abandoned industrial sites; the unofficial nature reserves that encircle British urban areas. These latter two volumes while alluded to in this section, are only considered here to give some post-period context to the earlier works, emphasising that interest in the suburban landscape has taken a variant route in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The earliest manifestation of the interwar suburb in the Patcham area is that of the plotland communities that sprang up in the wake of the Abergavenny land sale of 1921. The theoretical aspects of the plotland movement have been extensively covered by Hardy and Ward; they outline the main tenets of the subject in their opening chapter 'Property and Freedom', which showed this particular English suburban form as a unique landscape, one they thought more akin to the frontier than an English landscape, however

with this statement they ignore the fact that these landscapes of informal settlement were indeed 20<sup>th</sup> century urban frontiers. Anecdotal evidence from several of the occupants of the Sweet Hill colony suggest more than a passing resemblance to the edge of civilisation, with tales of one settler with tobacco grown, dried and smoked; of hunting with shotguns from bungalow windows and even brewing whisky from a homemade still! and all on a stretch of that most iconic of English landscapes - the South Downs. These settlements - 'plotlands', 'track and shack' or 'landscapes of informal settlement' in the current parlance of geographers, but hutments or shanty-towns at an earlier period, were perceived by the local authorities that tried to control them, as a nightmare. Hardy and Ward use the pejorative phrase 'anarchic rural slum' to add to the descriptions and the presence of the assorted structures became a by-word for rural desecration. But to the occupants of the plotlands, their huts and shacks gave a sense of freedom, a notion beloved by 'New Arcadians', where individual initiative became a route to freedom. This was not a view shared by all and the colonies were maligned by 'custodians of the environment' who called for public control of the settlements, this reaction taking a duality of approaches which could be draconian action or benign neglect. Their disparate nature being but one aspect of the theme of 'diversity' that is a core feature of this thesis.

Hardy and Ward saw the phenomenon of the largely interwar hutment colonies as possible lessons for today, where there is a continuing debate over issues of planning and housing, or more usually the over-use of the former and the under-provision of the latter. The duality of opinion was one that was to dog the debate over plotlands, where these came to be a cause-celebre of the concerned who saw them as a motley collection of makeshift structures, scattered and irregular, a landscape to be derided and scorned, whereas these landscapes of dispersal, to their occupants or aspirational proponents, were a colourful kaleidoscope of individualism, a landscape of diversity. The debate revolved around their situation on the margins, a location that came to represent more than their physical location at the urban fringe, usually on marginal land - shingle bars, sand dunes, coastal marshes, high downland; for the plotlanders were often seen as the on the margins of society where widening of the property owning democracy was starting to have impacts on the UK housing pattern. Certainly this present research found many aspects of

this marginality that Hardy and Ward outline, both in location and outlook. Several families took the opportunity to move to the fringing plots to escape the constraints or strictures of early 20<sup>th</sup> century UK cities, in the case of Patcham, the cramped and crowded terraced streets of Brighton; or as an Arcadian idyll after the trauma of the First World War; this latter point was poignantly made in a type-written letter sent by the plotlanders of Sweet Hill to the House of Lords in May 1924. The Arcadian existence was somewhat enhanced at Sweet Hill with Mr Harrington's illicit still above, giving a certain élan to their existence; this particular suburban landscape was more diverse than most current suburban dwellers would envisage. There was another aspect to the 'escape' noted by Hardy and Ward, which was the escape from the formality of white-collar life; Arlette Hinton recalled her grandfather had been an insurance man in Richmond, Surrey before setting up a fruit farm on Sweet Hill.

How this style of existence was dealt with by British bureaucracy varied from place to place. Hardy and Ward note that few plotlands were removed by the planning system; rather there was a gradual trend from temporary structures to a more permanent form of occupation and structure. In this respect the plotland settlement at Sweet Hill was an exception, as it was depopulated under a parliamentary act, the structures finally succumbing to the activities of the Canadian army in the Second World War, with all but two bungalows being destroyed. In this thesis it is possible to identify all of the stages identified by Hardy and Ward in their summary of the gradual disappearance of plotlands; stages which were broadly- decay, disappearance of owners and what they describe as 'trading up'. In the greater Brighton area the decay stage can be noted at Woodingdean -

'...on the representation of Coun.Weymouth steps are being taken to control the old vans and railway carriages used for habitation...' <sup>45</sup>

Whereas at Sweet Hill, the Brighton Water Bill 1924 records -

'...bungalows, but they are much more in the nature of temporary habitations. How long some of them will last we do not know.' <sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Brighton and Hove Herald (BHH)* 28.1.1933 p11

<sup>46</sup> ESRO DB/B1/15 *Brighton Corporation Water Bill* 1924

At Shoreham Beach, an altogether more raffish colony of ‘theatricals’ holidaying in old rolling stock was observed as a very Bohemian plotland, albeit with the more prosaic title - Bungalow Town’. Owner disappearance at Peacehaven was a major cause of bureaucratic concern; ‘ownership’ had been obtained in a dubious newspaper competition but was ‘secured’ by payment of a substantial sum, an offer declined by many of the ‘winners’, and was only remedied by compulsory purchase much later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>47</sup> The ‘trading up’ can be plotted along the London Road in Patcham at the former Bendigo estate where the army huts and small bungalows have succumbed to considerable redevelopment, as has been the case in the other significant Patcham plotland development along the south side of the Ladies Mile Road, an altogether more upmarket set of buildings than Bendigo. Out of the south east, Hardy and Ward’s last point can be well observed in the Coventry plotland of Binley Woods, a colony of army huts set in a muddy grid of tracks, now a select and well-appointed collection of homes in attractive woodland - the old Coombe Abbey lands.<sup>48</sup> With all the plotlands that were visited for this research, it was possible to see amongst the modern artefacts and design of 21<sup>st</sup> century suburbia, the former shape and structure of the earlier colony; continuity and change in a tangible form, but also an aspect of the suburban lifecycle.

The arguments surrounding this relatively new urban form were created around various strands of argument, but essentially, it was as they identify, a set of new social opportunities; Arcadian pastoralism and agrarianism; anti-urbanism against new demands on the environment; downmarket manifestations of more extravagant dreams; the plotlands forming an early post-war home-ownership, falling between ‘artisans of the council estates’ and ‘the petty bourgeoisie of suburbia’.<sup>49</sup>

Although Hardy and Ward go into great detail and at great length to outline the situation they seem to skate rather hastily over what must be a key element to the debate; that this very debate was very much carried on at the expense of the plotlanders, in that the avenues of discussion were the publications that were largely denied to the dwellers on

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<sup>47</sup> Payne T and Bernard S (2000) *Peacehaven: a chronology* p6

<sup>48</sup> Fry p141

<sup>49</sup> Hardy and Ward p18



the fringe; letters to the editor of the weightier newspapers, articles in preservationist journals such as the newly formed *Sussex County Magazine* by the author and broadcaster SPB Mais, himself living in some style in Grand Avenue Hove; or hard-backed volumes published by wealthy aesthetes such as Clough Williams-Ellis. The view from above was one at odds to the acquisition of the rapidly fragmenting agricultural land-holdings by 'lower-orders'. What was seen as rugged individualism by hutment owners came to be seen as intrusion into a largely aristocratic landownership by their 'betters'; diversity within the landscape of the new suburbs.

If one party could see this movement as a revolt against the inequities of urban based capitalism, allowing a return to an almost peasant architecture, then the other side saw a dangerous liberal belief in property ownership; a group disparagingly labelled as 'weekenders and a fine-evening population'.<sup>50</sup> Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the conflict and debate steadily grew, with one body seeing the plotlands as conveying rights of property and freedom of action, set against a world of growing State involvement, supposedly acting in the public interest. People of modest means versus the bureaucratic machine. Typewritten letters sent by Sweet Hill plotlanders testify to their seeing the coming conflict in the words of Hardy and Ward, as 'small men against the State' -

'...being most of us poor working class people...'<sup>51</sup>

Increasingly controls were called for over issues of land-use and future development, the appearance of the settlements often in open country of Downland or seashore, saw plotlanders pitched against Preservationists - the latter often being perceived as 'self-appointed guardians' - who were opposed to the disorder of personal freedom. Challenges to the physical place of plotlands were also seen as a challenge of class, but also as 'town against country'. The notion of landscape deterioration being thought by one side in the debate as evidence of social decline; statements presented for the 1924 Brighton Water Bill contained telling quotes from a Kings Counsel -

'...the inhabitants of Sweet Hill Estate are I think in many instances interested in fowls and pigs and things of that sort...'<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Hardy and Ward p22

<sup>51</sup> Typescript from Sweet Hill residents (1924 b) np

The conflicting values were played out at a literary level through the writings of Thomas Sharp and JB Priestley; the preservationists' call for greater government control brought about a number of measures under various Town and Country Planning Schemes, though as is pointed out in Hardy and Ward, the controls were half-hearted and measures taken under existing public health and housing legislation was more effectual. The controls that did exist were limited by their complexities and cumbersome nature which frequently allowed plotlanders to appear one step ahead of local authorities. Hardy and Ward conclude that most of the existing plotlands remained immune from official actions and the tide of development was too much for the existing legislation which was often performed by low income Rural District Councils and coastal authorities, local government bodies with greatest needs unable to provide effective opposition. This would accord with the situation at Patcham which until the 1927 Brighton Extension Act was administered by Steyning East Rural District Council (SERDC). The settlements that appeared upon the Patcham downland were too much for the distant SERDC surveyor, George Warr, to cope with and the mushroom-like growth of the huts and shacks, once established, was allowed to remain until upgrading and wartime military action changed the appearance of the plotlands. While most plotlands were in isolated locations, a factor that appealed to their occupants, Sweet Hill was on the fringe of an expanding urban area adjacent to a major pumping station. Sweet Hill had to have an act of parliament invoked by distant Brighton Council to move the occupants from the land - outside Brighton's jurisdiction - under which the Brighton Waterworks had their catchment area.

The plotlands of the early interwar period were reviled by many as unwholesome and unsightly, but where they survive many have become the essence of post-World War Two suburban style. Owing to the effect of the 1947 Town & Country Planning Act those remaining are now often on the urban fringe; in the case of the Brighton examples, adjacent to the South Downs National Park. What were seen as 'growths' or 'tentacles' are now more likely 'much sought after'. The passage of time thus gives perspective in a long term view of this particular social landscape.

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<sup>52</sup> ESRO DB/B1/15 Brighton Corporation Water Bill 1924 *minutes of evidence* p9

The work undertaken in *Arcadia for All* therefore matches very closely the sequence and appearance of the Patcham plotlands; but since its publication in 1984 a deal of work has been undertaken in this lower rung of suburban housing giving it more of a profile and although Hardy and Ward remains the standard work, there has been a growth of interest in these particular examples of human settlement, with several articles in local history journals and other published works and a television series *Plotlands* (1997) set in 1920's Essex. The 2011 TV production of *South Riding* had some of its settings in 'The Shacks' a good representation of a cliff top 'hutment' complete with railway carriage homes and possibly based on the colony at Withernsea near Spurn Head, Yorkshire. This colony was noted in a publication by King which will be considered next in this chapter.<sup>53</sup> Clearly the history of the plotlands, one which has come relatively recently to the history of British housing, is crucial to the study of suburban Brighton overall and to Patcham in particular.

The next stage of suburban growth - though usually contemporaneous with the plotlands - is that of the speculative builder working at a small scale, often constructing bungalows, either singly or in small estates, reflecting the money flow and new family size of the early interwar period. This aspect of the suburban growth is covered by Anthony King in '*The Bungalow: the production of a global culture*' also published in 1984. King's initial stance is beguilingly similar to Hardy and Ward -

'In certain circles in Britain...the very mention of the term 'bungalow' is sufficient to raise a smile, or better, a smirk. For these essentially middle-class or bourgeois folk there is something ridiculous, even distasteful about the word, even about the type of dwelling itself. Among a certain generation of architects and planners, or those who write on architecture, the reaction is even stronger, leading to outright condemnation.'<sup>54</sup>

Again, the opposite stance was one where the proponents saw the bungalow as a badge of proletarian origins, part of an un-planned struggle of dwellings somewhere between a working class community and the post-war New Towns. King takes a wide interpretation of the word bungalow, showing how it changed meaning from its original use as a Bengali peasants' hut. A political dimension was arrived at when the ruling white class took the structure as the standard hill-station dwelling, something which travelled with

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<sup>53</sup> King A (1984) *The Bungalow: the production of a global culture* p175

<sup>54</sup> King pxiii

the concept of the bungalow to colonial Africa. Its earliest manifestation in the UK was as a holiday or leisure building either prefabricated or purpose-built and its social status could be a shack at the beach or a substantial architect-designed country house.<sup>55</sup> The social history of the bungalow, whether taken from an architectural aspect or that of the political economy of the period, is a complex issue. The significance of the bungalow, as King noted was -

‘... as a separate, single-storey, single-household dwelling...in contrast to ...multi-household forms it is a form of dwelling, usually owned by its inhabitants, with no one living above, at the side or below.’<sup>56</sup>

King observed the social disparagement of a building that has been likened to a tiny country house rather than a tiny house in the country; his chapter dealing with Britain 1918-1980 tellingly uses the words ‘bungaloid growth’ as the chapter heading, a term coined by Dean Inge and employed in the interwar as a derogatory epithet to suburban growth, likening the buildings to some malignant affliction. Curiously, King referred to the bungalow styles found between the wars as taking its place in the vernacular building tradition when in fact the vast number of bungalows had a consistently non-vernacular appearance such that colonies of these structures many miles apart have a similar stylistic form with little if any relevance to the local i.e. vernacular, materials or styles.

As with the less formal structures of the track and shack colonies the bungalow bore the brunt of interwar preservationist comment, King makes the connection with Hardy and Ward in placing the spectacular growth of housing in the period and the speed of their spread across former agricultural land as a major factor in the war of attrition on both sides of the debate. As will be noted elsewhere in this work, it was the changing nature of land-ownership in the time leading up to the interwar period that propelled the flood of housing. King looks in some detail at the related factors of estate break-up, rising taxation on inheritance and land, and the impact of soaring food imports. He notes the fact that the twin terms of abuse ‘bungaloid growth’ and ‘ribbon development’ both appeared between 1925 and 1927, the period when the impact of rapid housing spread came to general notice. King notes the effect of economic change, brought about by national and

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<sup>55</sup> King p1

<sup>56</sup> King p4

international developments, on the relative economic bases of different parts of the UK; of direct relevance to this study is his statement that -

‘Whilst the north-east, north-west and Wales with their heavy industries were in decline, the new, electricity-based industries and service sector of the economy was growing rapidly in the south.’<sup>57</sup>

Along with the growth in these ‘new’ industries came a growth in numbers employed in national and local government as well as a burgeoning white-collar sector in financial services such as banking, insurance and the building society movement. This resulted in an expansion of the market in the south for new housing. The concomitant expansion of public transport provision and the increased supply of cheap building land near to urban areas all helped in the growth of the private housing market. The notion of home-ownership, as opposed to rental, was expanding steadily in the interwar period; the bungalow provided a stepping stone into the private property market and as the irreducible minimum of a house within its own grounds was second to none.<sup>58</sup>

This social change is well seen in the immediate post-First World War buildings emerging in Patcham. Here a wide selection of bungalow styles can be seen, either those interspersed through the Bendigo plotland or the more formal styles along the London Road south of the village. King’s assertion about houses in grounds being the first step to private property ownership was linked to his proposal that there was intense pride in this newly acquired social standing; indeed he quotes a Brighton resident of Chatsworth Road, near the superior residential Dyke Road, who sent as a Christmas card in 1925 a photograph of her bungalow.<sup>59</sup> In London Road, Patcham the same pride in ownership was displayed by Thomas and Emily Axe in naming their newly built 1925 bungalow - Axholme - a punning gesture to their abode.<sup>60</sup>

Part of the speed with which the bungalow spread throughout the land came because of their ease of construction; throughout the interwar period rapid progress was made in the provision of labour-saving components such as Sundeala panels or asbestos cement tiles,

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<sup>57</sup> King p158

<sup>58</sup> King p158

<sup>59</sup> King p160

<sup>60</sup> ESRO SERDC DB/D57/ 211K; Electoral Roll 1932; ESRO C/C70/22

but also including prefabricated sections.<sup>61</sup> King's assessment of the appeal of the bungalow was widespread and he notes the social factors of falling birth rate and family size at one end of the population pyramid, while at the opposite pole was the increasing numbers of retired persons for which a small one storey house in the South of England was an increased desire. In a section of his 'Bungaloid growth' chapter King outlines 'Bungalows by the sea' as the most prolific area of expansion, both in the hinterland and on the coast. He specifically identifies four areas as the main sites for permanent and vacation bungalows, each within 50 to 70 miles of major centres of population. Three areas are in the north, the Lancashire and Yorkshire coasts and North Wales between Llandudno and Prestatyn, and the fourth was the Hampshire and Sussex coast.

A particular strength of his work is the placing of the bungalow in its temporal and spatial landscape one that allows consideration of the wider external influences. The perception of the bungalow in relation to its changing social standing is well made -

'... 'country bungalows' of the 1880s were bourgeois versions of the elite's country seat... 'weekend country bungalows' of the 1920s were geared to middle-class needs; by the later 1920s there were plenty of proletarian bungalows around.'<sup>62</sup>

King's conclusion was that the widening of the property-owning class brought about a reaction in the existing property-owning group -

'Throughout the period leading up to the interwar the majority of the population - the folk, the common people, the proletariat, were a dependent class not least regarding housing... they owned neither property nor land. Owner-occupiers ... represented less than 10% ... of all households in the early twentieth century.'<sup>63</sup>

The concern over planning abuses and the wanton growth of housing into formerly rural areas was one increasingly led by that earlier property owning class with a swathe of campaigning publications; this aspect will be explored later in this study. The landscape of Patcham was changed from farmland to suburb in the early interwar period by the insertion into the agricultural scenery of scores of such structures; today bungalows line

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<sup>61</sup> King p165

<sup>62</sup> King p171

<sup>63</sup> King p189

the southern approach from Brighton, and the architectural historian Nicolas Pevsner notes the only 20<sup>th</sup> century entry for Patcham in his Sussex guide as -

‘...genteel bungalows come right up to the church.’<sup>64</sup>

Clearly King’s research and findings will contribute to a greater understanding of a large section of the Patcham housing picture, that of the bungalow.

One of the key themes that this present research expounds is that of diversity and the examples studied at Patcham span the range of styles and classes of occupancy, early interwar ‘hutments’ on the former Bendigo Estate, Sunburst gated semis in the Ladies Mile Estate and detached superior structures in the secluded closes of the Old Mill Estate; all bungalows but all diverse. Although the early period of suburban growth in the area is predominantly ‘bungaloid growth’ often as single dwellings by small builders in a diverse suite of styles, the 1930s saw the introduction of corporate estate developers building whole streets of similar appearance as part of a wider selection of suburban dwellings.

If the plotlands and their seemingly more respectable relation, the bungalow, represent the earlier stages of interwar suburban growth, then the following phase of large corporate housing schemes is the one that has impressed itself on the wider public consciousness as the suburban image. It is this potent image that Oliver, Davis and Bentley record in *Dunroamin’: the suburban semi and its enemies*. They discuss from the beginning of their work whether Dunroamin’ is -

‘...a declaration to the world that a family has settled in the home of its choice: an innocent exposure of poor taste and puerile humour; or the epitome of middle-class bourgeois complacency?’<sup>65</sup>

Such distinctions as these obscure the fact that all the statements above are not mutually exclusive and all can apply to each dwelling studied, the differentiation beloved by Oliver et al may not be recognised by the suburban occupants. The authors identify the debate as a conflict of values between those who live in the English suburbs and those who work in architecture and planning, a feature which would run thorough the story of the interwar suburb as a constant. As they point out in their introduction, the suburb is usually thought

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<sup>64</sup> Nairn I and Pevsner N (1965) *Buildings of England: Sussex* p458

<sup>65</sup> Oliver P (in Oliver P, Davis I and Bentley I (1981) *Dunroamin’: the suburban semi and its enemies*) p9

of in terms of ‘semis’ and bungalows forgetting the much more complex picture of roads, shopping centres, public utilities, cul-de-sacs and crescents, arterial roads and avenues.<sup>66</sup> To this could be added in Patcham’s landscape, schools and church halls, bowls clubs and scout huts, clock towers and bus shelters. This seems to imply that the suburban landscape is entirely a modern man-made construct, but as this study aims to show, the shape and character of the suburb has its roots far deeper in the cultural landscape, such that older land divisions, long pre-dating the twentieth century, appear in the present as a palimpsest, the past in the present; field shapes and their boundary features, impacts of varying types of landownership, temporal variation in land sales; back indeed to the geological variety of rocks and soils within a suburb, a prior constraint to suburban appearance that comes before all talk of ‘speculators’ ‘developers’ and ‘planners’.

Oliver et al identify the most significant image of the English suburb as being that of the prevalence of the three-bedroomed, semi-detached house. It was this structure they observe, that DH Lawrence described as ‘horrid little mantraps’ with Auden and Isherwood noting they were - ‘isolated from each other like cases of fever.’<sup>67</sup> *Dunroamin’* looks at the topic of the semi from a range of perspectives and it is evident from the briefest of excursions into the core study area of this research that the themes have a strong resonance in Patcham. Davis studies the semi in relation to the Modern Movement - its antithesis.<sup>68</sup> He takes the roots of Modernism in the suburb back to Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City Movement and the work of Baillie Scott in devising the prototype suburban semi-detached house. This was linked to the work of WR Lethaby who campaigned for clarity in the designs of popular housing - ‘Frankness is the great thing: disguises and subterfuge are always repulsive in building.’<sup>69</sup>

Davis works through the architectural, planning and commentating hierarchy, taking in Clough Williams-Ellis and JB Priestley alongside the early 20th century architects. He notes the concerns around the confusion of the 1920s in architectural styles, before the

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<sup>66</sup> Oliver et al p9

<sup>67</sup> Oliver et al p11

<sup>68</sup> Davis (in Oliver et al) p27

<sup>69</sup> Davis (in Oliver et al) p32



Continental influences of Le Corbusier bring about a new direction for suburban design. It was not until 1933 that the BBC broadcast a programme about 'Modern Architecture' a factor that was significant in moving the topic away from the confines of the literati and architectural profession and into a wider, national audience. In the terms of this study it is noteworthy that the only buildings in Patcham that have aspirations to 'Modern Architecture' - both on the Ladies Mile Estate - are built in 1934. Bentley takes the issue, seen both in *Arcadia for All* and *The Bungalow*, of suburban growth and the roots of opposition in the chapter 'Arcadia becomes Dunroamin'.<sup>70</sup>

The background to the interwar growth was the movement of the middle-classes to the city edge in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, seen in Patcham as the skein of Victorian villas that lined the London Road valley. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the housing expansion into the urban fringe was causing flurries of concern as the early period of architect design villas was joined by the small-builder speculative housing and by the 1920s local authority developments, often on a large scale. Davis' following chapter looked at 'A Celebration of Ambiguity' and the synthesis of contrasting values; a feature of the popular design and imagery of the period was the dichotomous situation of modernity with nostalgia.<sup>71</sup>

This was strongly in evidence in the publicity advertising newly built property for a major builder, where the virtues of the 'All Electric Estate' were interspersed with pictorial reference to half-timbered exteriors, rough-cast walls, and rustic fencing. In even more stark contrast were the 1934 white Modern Movement blocks in the Brighton suburb of Saltdean where the fences were woven sheep wattles. Bentley's 'Individualism or Community?' studied the continuity and disparity between private enterprise and the council estate, a suburban conflict of values between the primacy of the individual and the egalitarian community. This was a divide between the standardisation of council housing and the key concepts of private ownership -

'...individualism, private ownership and social mobility was reflected and reinforced, in specifically architectural terms, by a design tradition which differed in every detail from that of the council estate.'<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Bentley (in Oliver et al) p54

<sup>71</sup> Davis (in Oliver et al) p83

<sup>72</sup> Bentley (in Oliver et al) p 114

This schism in the interwar housing sector is exemplified by the Cutteslowe wall separating two socially diverse areas of North Oxford, an attempt by private estate dwellers to physically separate them from a neighbouring council house development.<sup>73</sup> Dunroamin, the lifestyle and the actual housing, were actively promoted by the media and the middle-class press of the period with the *Daily Express* and *Daily Mail* providing yearly exhibitions and home improvement volumes. Paul Oliver's chapter 'Great Expectations' outlines this theme with excursions into the interior design and popular culture features of the period, including both the films of that time and their elaborate picture-houses; curiously Dunroamin is absent from all but the most obscure films of the interwar period. The mainstream industry was concerned with the romantic historic or the aristocratic lives of the contemporary upper-class, while the documentary film-makers focussed on the lives of the working class; Dunroamin, though a feature of large areas of the British landscape, is missing from the film stock of the interwar.<sup>74</sup>

Ian Bentley carries on the theme of Dunroamin's individuality with 'Choice and Adaption' in which the fine scale of the suburb, outside and inside the house is considered especially the way it has been seen as a contrast to the Modern Architecture and its apparent lack of interest in the individual.<sup>75</sup> The range of choice available to the Dunroamin settler is laid out in a table giving 'planes of choice', from the house as a shell down to the interior and external fittings, the latter being those items that have a symbolic function such as ornaments or garden figurines. The role of the garden as a window into the internal culture of its 'parent' house is considered as this gave scope for individual expression in a way that the domestic structure was incapable of providing; although the basic design and ground plan of the Dunroamin semi did give far more freedom for expressive design detail than is usually thought. Its -

'flexibility in use...is diametrically opposed to the functionalist's aim of tailoring forms closely to particular activities...the speculative builder's success in achieving some measure of responsiveness...may be one reason why the architect ...has hated Dunroamin so much.'<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Bentley (in Oliver et al) p120-121

<sup>74</sup> Oliver (in Oliver et al) p134

<sup>75</sup> Bentley (in Oliver et al) p136

<sup>76</sup> Bentley(in Oliver et al) p153

In the context of Patcham the almost infinite variety in the exterior detail of the Dunroamin semi can be easily observed by a walk down almost any avenue on the Ladies Mile Estate, itself usually considered the type locality for the ‘anonymity’ of the suburb, but in reality a testament to Bentley’s statement above. Nothing quite encapsulates the notion of the suburban Dunroamin dwelling as ‘The Galleon on the Front Door’, the subject of Paul Oliver’s chapter delineating the imagery of the suburb; Oliver returns to the earlier theme of the Mock Tudor, drawing on the design authors Anthony Bertram and John Gloag for some acerbic commentary -

‘Why do we live in this half-baked pageant, always hiding our ideas in the clothes of another age?’<sup>77</sup>

Patcham contains a wealth of such period detail, with a range of ‘Tudorbethan’ designs from the decidedly upmarket detached properties on the 1936 Old Mill Estate, to the more prosaic decorative features seen in the 1920’s housing along Winfield Avenue. The penultimate chapter ‘A Lighthouse on the Mantelpiece’ looks at symbolism in the home, the suburb through the letterbox; grained Norwegian pine coloured to resemble English oak, Lyncrusta wall covering in the hall, a trio of ducks ‘flying’ across the flock paper of the living room. Fire-dogs with crested shields, screens with galleons, furniture that resembles the Jacobean style; the Dunroamin resident was searching for the symbols of history not the facts.<sup>78</sup> In true Dunroamin style the historic sat with the Modern in the artefacts of the suburb, with radios disguised in Tudor chests, electric bulbs disguised as candelabra, electric fires with fake glowing ‘logs’. The Ladies Mile Estate in post-1932 Patcham used this appeal relentlessly, the half-timbered exterior of the Mock Tudor semis seen at the end of the developer’s brochure comes immediately before a list of labour-saving electrical devices -

‘At Ladies Mile this house of the future is actually yours now for the choosing. Just think! Every house all electric...’<sup>79</sup>

In his concluding chapter Oliver traces the evolution of the Dunroamin ethos into the post-war era. The privations of war, bomb damage and destruction, post-war restrictions on use of building materials, changing concepts of design and the strictures of the 1947

<sup>77</sup> Gloag J quoted in Oliver (in Oliver et al) p161

<sup>78</sup> Oliver(in Oliver et al) p176

<sup>79</sup> *Downland Homes by the Sea* (c 1936?) p20

Town and Country Planning Act all conjoined to create a different world to that of even six years earlier. What he states in the final paragraph of the volume is the assertion that the architectural profession, still clings tenaciously to its clichés.<sup>80</sup>

The three different periods of suburban growth that this study records can be exemplified by the volumes chosen for review above, however an over-riding theme to the whole period was that it was a very particular form of landscape change and one that covered many aspects of national character and culture, themes that can be seen woven into the fabric, not just of Dunroamin, but also of the plotlands and the bungalow developments. In *Landscape and Englishness* David Matless explores the multiple contradictions surrounding both the period of this study and the changing meanings of landscape, in a country rapidly undergoing landscape change. The opening chapter of Matless - 'Versions of Landscape and Englishness' - links clearly to themes explored earlier, whereby he employs the fringe settlement of Potter Heigham, Norfolk, a classic plotland, as a metaphor for the wider issues of landscape utilisation and appreciation. The initial sections of Matless's book explore the wider issues of Englishness and of landscape before going into some detail on 'The Crisis of English landscape' and the tangled web of societies and polemic authors who sought to give some semblance of order to the rapidly changing picture of Britain's landscape in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The section on English settlement, 'City and Country: against Hermaphrodites' discusses the contrasting views - similar in form to the Raymond Williams' text 'Country and the City' - around the appearance, shape and form of The City. With arguments for and against the concept of the Garden City as a way through the complexity of rapidly expanding urban areas. The hermaphrodite in the chapter heading here is reference to the indeterminate nature of the suburb, a settlement area lying between the perceived 'masculinity' of the city and the perceived 'femininity' of the rural -

'The suburb becomes a contentious English landscape, valued by some as essentially English in its modest scale, domestic values and humdrum life, and castigated by others for the same characteristics. For preservationists the suburb becomes an English predicament, a site not of pleasant town-and-country blend but an indeterminate place; visually, socially and sexually.'<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Oliver (in Oliver et al) p206

<sup>81</sup> Matless D (1998) *Landscape and Englishness* p34

In quoting from a key text of the later interwar period '*Britain and the Beast*', Matless utilises the writings of the wide range of authors that the editor, Clough Williams-Ellis, had marshalled. John Gloag an influential writer on design, tried to look sympathetically on the 'Suburban scene' finding potentially romantic English landscape resistant to a 'continental' and abstract modernism.<sup>82</sup> Gloag was keen to state that his enthusiasm for the suburb did not extend to the 'sham-Tudor' housing, an aspect of the community that he hoped would have fallen into ruin by the time of the 'Golden Machine Age' that was just around the corner. As with much writing on the interwar suburb there is very much a class distinction in the attitudes, a point that Matless raises, with the idea that there are 'good and bad' suburbs, with the general air of disdain raining from above. Little effective criticism is recorded anywhere of a 'sham-Tudor' occupier being anything other than satisfied with their choice of dwelling. Perhaps they were too busy leading their own greatly improved lives to worry about such niceties of critique. Certainly the views of Betjeman - 'come friendly bombs and fall on Slough...' - was not one shared by occupants in the closes and avenues of the urban fringes and the more sympathetic view of JB Priestly, describing the 'Third England' as the domain of the new working class consumer, was more in line with popular opinion.<sup>83</sup>

The period of 1925-1927 has been noted by King as the period when the use of pejorative terms such as 'bungaloid growth' and 'ribbon development' came into the language. This coincides with the publication of major campaigning organs; locally the *Sussex County Magazine* and establishment of the Sussex Downsmen, nationally the publication of Clough Williams-Ellis' *England and the Octopus*. Matless observes that Williams-Ellis' idea of the tentacles of growth, the ribbons, growing naturally rather than in a planned fashion, was in fact harking back to an Abercrombie article of 1915 where the town-planner was drawing on the work of a Belgian modernist poet. Similarly, Geoffrey Boumphrey, the broadcaster and contributor to the Shell Guide series, had trenchant views, as ever from above the crowd, on the tastes of the vulgar -

'...the great majority, the speculative builder and those who buy his wares may have shocking taste - they have shocking taste...'

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<sup>82</sup> Matless p34

<sup>83</sup> Matless p35

Matless records Bournemouth as commenting that to fight the octopus needed not escapism or nostalgia but - '...a live growing sense of order, decency and beauty.'

The ability to take a literal and metaphorical overview was central to preservationists' self-styled authority. Maps and aerial photographs are routinely deployed as a familiar expert currency, signifying a position of advanced technology and expert authority.<sup>84</sup> The furthest flung tentacles of ribbon development however were often not long enough to link up with the peripheral and often isolated plotlands, the 'shacks and tracks' that Hardy and Ward had so evocatively recorded. Matless goes into some detail outlining the plotland community - The Shacks - featured in *South Riding*, and using that unusually campaigning novel to encapsulate the link made at the time (1936) between the view of The Shacks as a preservationists nightmare or a site of social freedom.<sup>85</sup> It is noted in this section that there was a contemporary aesthetic that saw the plotlands as a haven for home-coming servicemen, a landscape and settlement almost outside of society and authority; it is this point that was made by the Sweet Hill colonists at Patcham in 1924 when Brighton sought to clear the site. Matless charts the dichotomous approaches to plotlands seen by opposing camps, some either encapsulate freedom -

...we wanted a place that was primitive, where the children could do as they liked...play pirates, build rafts, fall in the river and get covered in mud.'<sup>86</sup>

But opposition to this libertarian approach came as expected from the preservationists -

'...pollution has infected practically the whole stretch of the coasts of Sussex and Kent...a bungaloid growth has sprung up of quite unspeakable ugliness...'<sup>87</sup>

The debate around personal choice of housing or directed preservationist planning was played out at a variety of levels and the study of the on-going dispute is well made by Matless who takes the issues to a range of levels centred on the complex notion of English landscape. On a more localised level the tone that the provincial press took of suburban expansion was of a far more positive nature, and both editorial and advertising campaigns emphasise the positive virtues of the new housing. A coach tour of the Greater

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<sup>84</sup> Matless p38

<sup>85</sup> Matless p39

<sup>86</sup> Matless p41

<sup>87</sup> Matless p42

Brighton area for the Western Brighton Traders Association in the summer of 1933, was noted in a local newspaper as -

‘...[passing]improvement schemes costing half a million pounds; they saw great new towns of artistic houses which have in many cases rehoused families from the blackest slums of Brighton; and they saw scores of acres of unspoilt Downland saved by Brighton Corporation.’<sup>88</sup>

As has been observed throughout this chapter there was of course a dissenting voice from on high. The ‘artistic’ houses would have pleased the President of the RIBA (E.Guy Dawber) who two years earlier had commented -

‘Many of the buildings now being erected ...were exotic to this country, they were stark and bold and without any interest. A great deal of this architecture was borrowed from the Continent, but it must be borne in mind that much of it on the Continent was due to the poverty of the nations concerned...’<sup>89</sup>

Truly a concept of landscape and Englishness.

## 2.2

### Key Themes

Within this thesis there are some key themes that will be pursued, and throughout the text reference will be made to the following questions; how the notion of ‘*Continuity and Change*’ in the landscape is exemplified in the built environment of the suburb, in particular the continuity evident in the distribution, placement and direction of building estates and their roads; the almost literal, concrete manifestation of change. In contrast to the views of some scholars, notably WG Hoskins, whose statements on the 20<sup>th</sup> century landscape were scathing in their denial of any form of continuity or aesthetic value -

“...since the year 1914 every single change in the English landscape has either uglified it or destroyed its meaning, or both... it is a distasteful subject but it must be faced for a few moments”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> *Brighton and Hove Herald* 17.6.1933 p4

<sup>89</sup> *Brighton Gazette* 17.1.1931 p15

<sup>90</sup> Hoskins p298

The work of Alan Rogers, though not as disparaging as Hoskins, took no heed of 20<sup>th</sup> century developments, barely mentioning even the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and thus giving no acknowledgement to the seamless change that takes place in the history of any landscape. This research on Patcham places the early 21<sup>st</sup> century built environment in direct line of descent from estate and field boundaries recorded in 18<sup>th</sup> century cartographic evidence (and so presumably from even earlier unrecorded land management policies).

Again, in defiance of ‘received wisdom’ the second theme pursued will be that of the *Diversity* of the suburb; how each estate, avenue and house has characteristics which define it as different from its neighbour. This is a theme that is covered in each of the key texts in a variety of forms. Hardy and Ward take it as almost axiomatic that plotland dwellings were individual creations, albeit even if as railway carriages they may have had a corporate identity. King noted the opprobrium that often came with the bungalow, as an anonymous housing form, but acknowledging all the while that there was a swathe of diversity within the built form -

“...the interest of the bungalow-owner was, not least with regard to re-sale, to have a universal standard product which none the less demonstrated his and her own personal possession.”<sup>91</sup>

Oliver et al, even dealing with the housing of corporate estates stress the individuality that the occupants brought to their dwellings, whether externally through their gardens or internally through their choice of decorative style and Matless sees this diversity as a tangible form of Englishness, a desire to be seen as distinct from a neighbour.

As with all urban settlements a degree of change over time is noted giving a *Lifecycle* to the suburb; one of defined stages of development identifiable by evidence of location, building design and land-use. The shacks and tracks of the 1920s Hardy and Ward plotlands, had a lifecycle within the wider and longer term cycle of the suburb overall -

“Commonly, a permanent structure emerged in stages - perhaps with an ex-army bell tent to start with, progressing on a weekend and holiday basis to a presentable building, extended and improved over time with new additions to the family or thoughts of a comfortable retirement home.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> King p257

<sup>92</sup> Hardy and Ward p278



Plotland settlements evolved into an urban fringe that was created by their genesis but which was preserved by later planning controls and by wartime building restrictions. Their place on the fringe has given them a certain cachet, either by dint of their peripheral location giving them a rural outlook, or by that same location ensuring few neighbours. Several of the plotlands studied in the field for this research either at the former Bendigo estate, Patcham or at Newhaven Heights or at Jaywick Sands, are areas that do not seem to encourage close study of the locale or any form of enquiry of the occupants; high fences, CCTV and the barking of large dogs ensure compliance.

Hardy and Ward note that there are contradictions in the way plotlands have evolved, often in a suburban form of the inner-urban, 'gentrification'-

“...that as these areas go ‘up-market’...the more likely it is that the attractive plotland characteristics that are the very object of conservation will themselves rapidly disappear.”<sup>93</sup>

King in his work on *The Bungalow* charted similar stages of its evolution but more in terms of its social standing - colonial administrators dwelling, to seaside holiday home, to retirement abode. Oliver et al in *Dunroamin* essentially dealt with the private sector semi-detached housing that was appearing in large corporate estates across the UK. Built in a more professional fashion than their hybrid earlier suburban neighbours, their inception coincided with the increase in the 1930s of planning controls and building regulations. Change over time was more constrained in the brick of the 1930s suburb than in the wood of the earlier plotlands and bungalows; rather than the dramatic changes that could occur in the track and shack developments (and which still occur to the present) there were gradual changes, in the addition of garages, conservatories and extensions. Wartime damage has removed some properties, as occurred in Patcham, roofs have lost their distinctive pantiles to standard roofing materials, windows and doors are replaced with double glazing and UPVC cladding.

The position of the 20<sup>th</sup> century suburb in the literature of local history and geography has changed over time, and a century on from the start of large scale suburban growth in the United Kingdom seems a good time to see the suburb in *Perspective*. The wider picture

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<sup>93</sup> Hardy and Ward p242

of the interwar suburban world can be seen in all its rich complexity through the observations of Matless in *Landscape and Englishness* where the many entwined strands of nationality are examined. In the context of the suburb Matless' introductory quote from Foucault can suffice for much of the study of this particular landscape category -

“...it is an unstable assemblage of faults, fissures and heterogeneous layers that threaten the fragile inheritor from within or underneath...”<sup>94</sup>

Matless draws out the themes in a similar form to those outlined above, with notions of changing meanings in the English landscape existing alongside elements of continuity and diversity; the whole idea of lifecycle in thought as well as physical structures is made through a range of intellectual and popular culture modes of representation.

In all the key texts noted above can be seen those elements that are key to this work; continuity and change, seen in Patcham where the new landscape of housing is absorbed into the former landscape of agriculture, all the while constrained by the strictures of prior landownership; this itself leads into a landscape of diversity where different developers, builders and occupants each contribute to this diversity creating individual landscapes, themselves contributing to the changing lifecycle of the larger suburb, thus giving a wider perspective to the notion of suburbia as a homogenous whole.

Each of the texts referred to forms part of the wider picture of suburban growth in the interwar period, none of them are exclusive, each has relevance to the whole; particular in the case of *Arcadia for all*, general and philosophical in Matless. Rather as in a suburb, a series of diverse but interwoven elements.

The following chapter outlines the lead up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century growth, outlining the historical background to both the village and parish of Patcham and also the nature of local and national agriculture, along with the changes that were occurring in the economic structure of the locality.

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<sup>94</sup> Matless p9

## Chapter 3

## Patcham - Historical growth

*'Patcham. This is a neat little village about a mile and a half, by the continuance of the turnpike, from Preston...' 1830*<sup>95</sup>



Fig 5  
Church Hill, Patcham early 20th century  
Source: Naomi Gorton collection

The farm workers flint dwellings lining Church Hill, sold by the Abergavenny estate in 1922, now constitute some of the most 'sought-after' housing in Patcham village.

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<sup>95</sup> Sickelmore C and R (1830) *Brighton and its environs* p80

## 3.1

## Landscape of pre-development Patcham

*‘...beyond Patcham there are many objects that invite attention, and the rides, in all directions, are salubrious and pleasant’ 1830*<sup>96</sup>

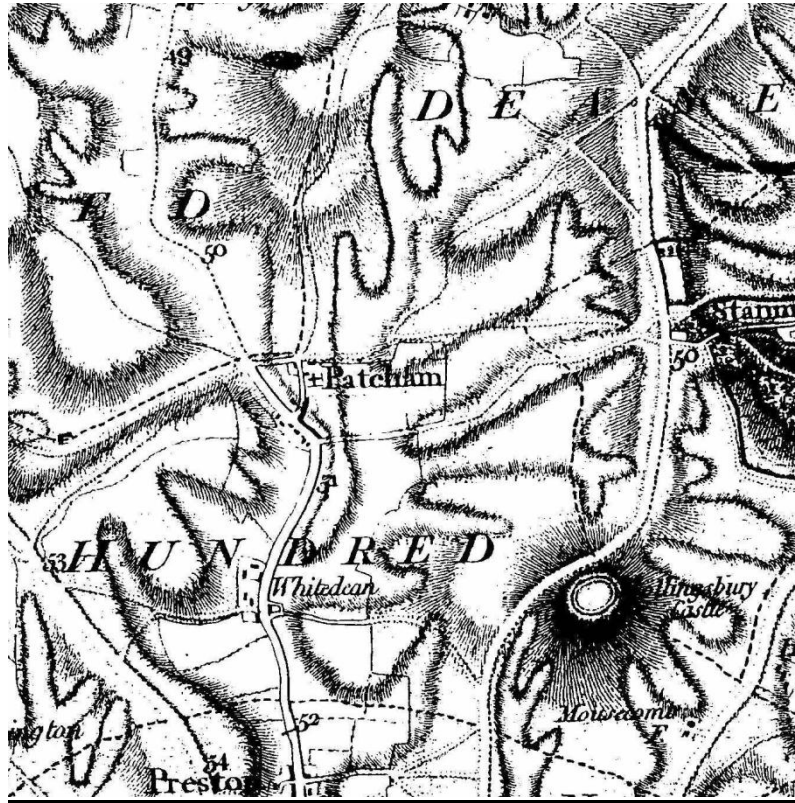


Fig.6

Patcham topography

Source: Gardner and Gream 1795(detail)<sup>97</sup>

Showing the topography, road layout, village and hamlet distribution in the parish. The field boundaries surrounding the village are still discernible in the urban landscape of the 21st century.

Having outlined some of the contextual literature as it relates to suburban growth both generally and more specifically around Brighton, we now turn to setting out the spatial and environmental setting of Patcham itself. The key themes of this study, though largely relating to the 20<sup>th</sup> century growth and development of the area, can plainly be seen to be in operation in the period that this chapter addresses. Continuity and change is evident throughout

<sup>96</sup> Sickelmore p80

<sup>97</sup> Kingsley D (1982) *Printed maps of Sussex 1575-1900* p108

landscape history and is a key theme in landscape studies research; here in Patcham its tenets of continuity are revealed through the historic shape and possession and naming of landholdings that originate many centuries before the period of main suburban growth. The built environment of the village core, though changing over time, has elements of continuity through its use of vernacular building materials and highway alignments. Change is evident in the usage of the landholdings, their sale and resale, their change of use from agriculture to housing and services. Landscapes of production changing to landscapes of consumption. The diversity theme can be discerned in the variable land-use of the parish, which along with its pattern of land-ownership has seen housing developed along a variety of stylistic routes and geographical units. With all landscape change the variety of elements involved can be seen as part of a lifecycle of a land unit, either as a single plot, an estate or the area as a whole; a process of change over time that is a continuous process yet one which can fire local sensibility when that movement through the lifecycle clashes with public perception of change. Seen as a long term process the adaptability of an area to a range of often external variables can evoke strong feelings but seen as part of wider process a perspective can be gained which is not apparent at a very local level.

At the drawing up of the tithe survey in 1842 the parish of Patcham covered 4398 acres<sup>98</sup>, a considerable size for the Sussex downland where the norm is for smaller parishes.<sup>99</sup> Such Downland parishes often had the social characteristics associated with ‘close’ communities, around a village core of church, big house and manorial farms, a social geography outlined in the work of Mills and Short, Holderness and Brandon.<sup>100</sup> In the 19th century the parish of Patcham lay across the downland dip-slope, stretching from the border with West Blatchington and Newtimber in the west, to Falmer and Stanmer in the east, Pyecombe and Ditchling in the north and Preston in the south.<sup>101</sup> The highest land was across the northern part of the parish, with the soil mainly light and chalky, but with patches of heavier, gorse clad ‘clay-with-flints’ along the ridges. The southern part characterised by a series of fertile valleys, carried the main routes from Brighton to London and Lewes. The settlements within the parish were located in these two valleys both of which carried chalk streams that ran

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<sup>98</sup> ESRO (1842) *Patcham tithe survey* TD/E 46

<sup>99</sup> Leslie K and Short B (1999) *An historical atlas of Sussex* p99 and endpapers

<sup>100</sup> Mills D and Short B (1983) Social change and social conflict in 19<sup>th</sup> century England *Journal of peasant studies* v10n4 p253; Holderness B (1972) Open and close parishes in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries *Agricultural History Review* v20 p126; Brandon P (1998) *The South Downs* p120

<sup>101</sup> Horsfield T (1835) *County of Sussex* p173

south into Brighton.<sup>102</sup> There was a nucleated village at Patcham on the London Road, a hamlet at Withdean further south and another at Moulescoomb in the Lewes Road valley, two miles to the east.<sup>103</sup> For the purposes of this study, the term Patcham will refer to the area around the village and not the entire parish.

Patcham in the 19th century saw many changes, mainly in response to rapidly expanding Brighton 3 miles south of the village; however a description of the area in 1809 would suffice for much of the century -

‘...a neat village...it contains between thirty and forty houses and about three hundred inhabitants...on the left of the road, or street, in passing through this village, the mansion of Mrs Payne [sic], from its variegated beauties of situation and elegant construction, is regarded with admiration. The grounds about it are judiciously laid out, and the shrubbery, which covers the slope of the hill above it...affords a spectacle as picturesque and pleasing as can well be imagined. There is only one Inn at Patcham, at which the coaches to and from London generally stop, to take up passengers, parcels etc. if any should there await them.’<sup>104</sup>

In the first half of the 19th century the parish was almost wholly agricultural, with the classic South Downs picture of large estates of tenanted farms working the land as an area of sheep/corn husbandry.<sup>105</sup> Within the sheltered London Road valley, the Coombe Deposit soils watered by the Wellesbourne were developed as arable land, hay meadows, grass plats with dairy cattle and market gardens, part of the ‘food-chain’ supplying the resort of Brighton.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Farrant J and S (1975) *Preston in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries* p4

<sup>103</sup> Farrant S (1985) *Changes in Brighton and Hove suburbs: Preston and Patcham 1841-1871* p16

<sup>104</sup> Attree W (1809) *Topography of Brighton* p6

<sup>105</sup> Brandon (1998) p62

<sup>106</sup> Farrant S (1985) p36



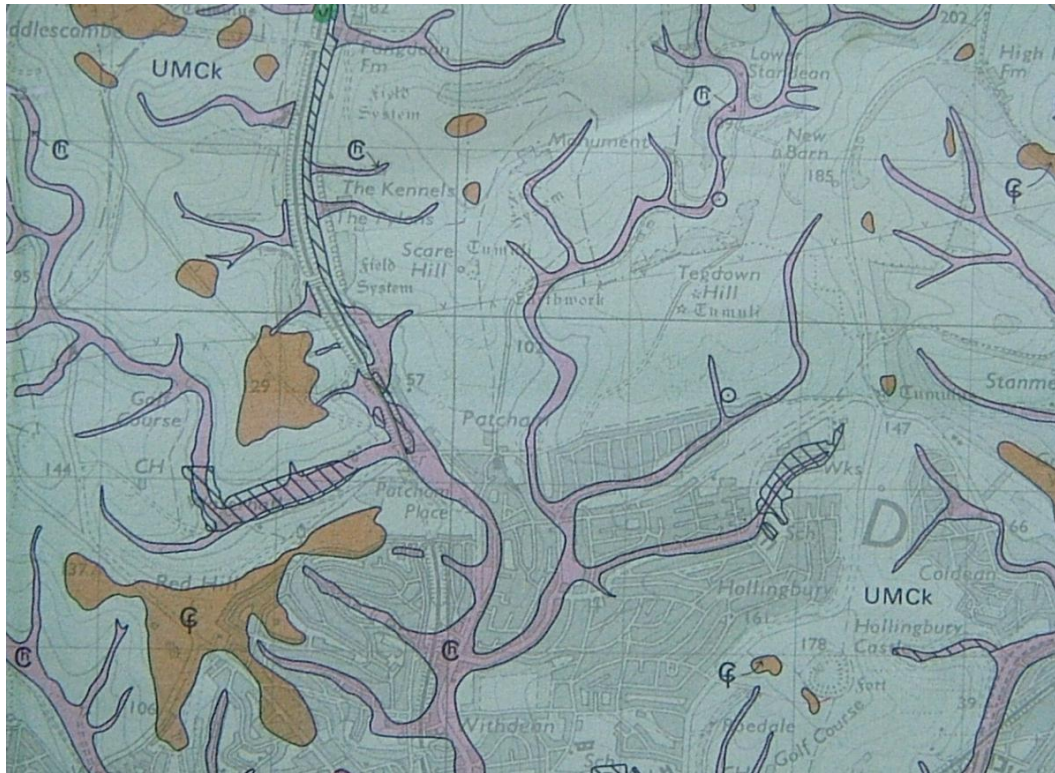


Fig 7

Patcham - geological deposits and drainage pattern

Source: British Geological Survey<sup>107</sup>*'Reproduced with the permission of the British Geological Survey ©NERC. All rights Reserved'***© Crown copyright Ordnance Survey. All rights reserved**Geology key

\\\\\\\\\\\\ = 'made ground'

Cf = Clay-with-flints

Ch = Coombe head deposits

UM = Upper &amp; Middle Chalk

Patcham village lies across the ridge and along the western side of the large central downland spur. The geological heritage of the area has caused problems for 21<sup>st</sup> century householders; in the 'dry valley' draining the slopes to the east of the village spur, buildings are cracking as the Coombe Deposits solifluct down the valley westward.

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<sup>107</sup> BGS sheet 318/333 [section]

## Patcham old village



Fig 8

Patcham village, early 20th century - the 'picturesque'.

Source: Naomi Gorton collection

*'Though genteel bungalows come right up to the church, there is still a village feeling about Patcham with the open Downs behind.'*<sup>108</sup>

The old village of Patcham had many of the textbook indicators of a 'close' Downland community; light soil, supporting large farms working the downland in a traditional form of folded sheep and large arable enclosures. In the mid-19th century the lord of the manor, the Marquis of Abergavenny, held a large acreage, though an absentee landowner living far away at Eridge Park near Tunbridge Wells; in the 19th century the 5th largest landowners in Sussex, only narrowly below the acreage of the Earls of Chichester, their neighbouring estate bordering Patcham on the east beyond the Ditchling Road.<sup>109</sup> The second largest owner in the parish was a well-connected family, the Paines living at Patcham Place, in-laws of the Brighton property magnates, the Kemps.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Nairn I & Pevsner N (1965) *The buildings of England: Sussex* p458

<sup>109</sup> Leslie and Short p98

<sup>110</sup> ESRO HOP 44/3 Paine family papers





Fig 9

Patcham Place

Source: author's own image 11.5.2006

*'a handsome building erected in the early part of the reign of Queen Elizabeth and is situate in the Downs flanked with a fine hanging wood intersected with walks and with a fine luxuriant lawn' [1862]*<sup>111</sup>

This attractive house was separated in its park from the main village street, which curved away from the park in two directions, one was northeast up a steep incline to the church and the home farm of the Abergavenny holdings, Patcham Court farm. This street is still lined with the vernacular architecture of the Downland; agricultural workers' cottages constructed in the rough field-flints of the neighbourhood, opposite a number of small 19th century middle-class villas. South from Patcham Place, the London Road curving away south-east contained the service sector of the village - tavern, post office, bakery and shops, along with the workers' cottages in Patcham Square, which still survive in the 21st century; further south were the more substantial buildings of Wooton House, a square built, mathematical-tiled villa and Southdown House, the latter described by Pevsner as a - '...handsome Early Georgian house of five bays, two storeys, knapped flint...brick.'<sup>112</sup> The London Road led on to the small dairy holding of Elm Farm and The Forge. Kelly's directory of 1862 lists the barest minimum of services, not unusual in the 'close' community nature of South Down villages -

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<sup>111</sup> Kelly's Directory 1862

<sup>112</sup> Nairn and Pevsner p45

Richard Ballard	millers and baker
Peter Barkshire	Black Lion
William Cleare	blacksmith
James Friend	grocer and draper
John Legg	laundry
J and H Simmonds	shoemakers <sup>113</sup>

Nearly fifty years later in 1909 little enough had changed in the way of the village services -

Miss Alfrey	Laundress
Ebenezer Ballard	millers and baker
Miss Bartlett	shopkeeper
William Bourne	laundryman
Thomas Challis	Black Lion
Charles Friend	grocer
Ebenezer Hammond	contractor
Joseph Harris	bakers, post office, Tower Mill
Mrs Caroline Hole and son	shopkeepers
Mrs Ruth Holder	blacksmith
George Hole	boot maker
Edward Still	carpenter <sup>114</sup>

Throughout the century, and particularly after the improvements to the London Road across Sussex in the 1820s, there was rapid growth of road traffic to and from the resort, so vividly portrayed by Cobbett -

‘Brighton...is so situated that a coach which leaves it not very early in the morning, reaches London by noon and starting to go back in two hours and a half afterwards, reaches Brighton not very late at night.’<sup>115</sup>

The main village economy was agricultural, but started to change with the road improvements and growth in London-Brighton traffic; enhanced transport functions came with the smithy, the Black Lion inn and the later development of tea gardens; increasingly the village was serving a ‘highway function’ role owing to its location on the main road; certainly the advent of the motor-car was felt on the narrow road through the village, and its economy responded with the expansion of the forge increasingly serving as a garage. Early in the 20th century the travel guide writer and Punch columnist, E.V.Lucas noted -

‘...Patcham, a dusty village that for many years has seen too many bicycles and now is in the way of seeing too many motor cars.’<sup>116</sup>

Clearly, the continuity of the agricultural sector was succumbing to technological change.

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<sup>113</sup> *Kelly's Directory 1862*

<sup>114</sup> *Kelly's Directory 1909*

<sup>115</sup> Cobbett W (1830) *Rural Rides* p160

<sup>116</sup> Lucas E (1912) *Highways and byways in Sussex* p198

The late 19th and early 20th centuries were a time of acute agricultural depression for many of the UK agricultural areas, a period that brought about immense change in both rural and urban areas, although it is wise to bear in mind the comments of Howkins that the social history of rural England in the years from 1850 until after the Great War is complex.<sup>117</sup> The effect of the agricultural changes will be dealt with in a later section. Patcham's workforce was less badly hit by the depression than neighbouring parishes, as the road pattern within the parish and its proximity to the resort meant the provision of hay, milk, and market garden produce proved a useful buffer to economic decline. As has been noted, the growth of the London Road traffic provided work for The Black Lion tavern; for the more abstemious there were The Cherry Tree, The Old Cottage, Patcham Cross, The Fountain and The Jap, all similar tea-gardens, except The Old Cottage which alone boasted a parrot on a perch. Described as 'Ye Olde Cottage' in advertisements, it promised - 'homely meals by candlelight'<sup>118</sup>. Patcham was a permanent fixture in the itineraries of early rambling and cycling clubs with planned routes into the hilly hinterland of the resort.<sup>119</sup> For traveller or cyclist alike Patcham seemed to possess those qualities most sought after by the discerning visitor. The old and historic black-tiled Patcham Place set in a handsome park, backed by a 'hanger' of beech woods, flint cottages ascending a steep hill to the ivy clad church, and at the top of the hill, the farmyard of Patcham Court with a huge timbered barn, flint dovecot, duck-fringed pond and extensive downland views. The village became a favourite, not only for the bands of cyclists, for the Black Lion was a rural destination of the horse-charabancs, full of 'works-outing' Brightonians seeking a 'beano', escaping the housing and smoke filled central valley of the resort; by 1912 Brighton Scouts were camping at Patcham Court farm.<sup>120</sup>

These changes were bringing a degree of diversity to both the local economy and to the built environment, an aspect of the community lifecycle that would bring far greater changes over the following two decades. Seen as isolated events, the cycling tours, Scout camps and works outings do not amount to major changes, but seen as part of an evolving social landscape there is a perspective of wider and longer processes taking shape.

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<sup>117</sup> Howkins A (1992) *Reshaping rural England: a social history 1850-1925* p1

<sup>118</sup> ESRO SERDC DM/A/1 Minutes 5.12.22 p160; *The Brighton Illustrated Sporting Mail* 7.4.1934 p12

<sup>119</sup> Anon (1923) *Ramblers guide: Brighton* pp. 27,34,38,42,47

<sup>120</sup> *Brighton Gazette* 13.4.1912 p7



Fig 10  
Patcham from the west 1914  
Source: Naomi Gorton collection

The comment added to the postcard - ‘*What do you think of our town?*’ is certainly prophetic, suburbia already linked Patcham to Brighton by this date, and the use of ‘town’ presaged the coming urban flood.

### 3.3

#### Pre-World War One suburbia



Fig 11  
Ashburnham Lodge, Old London Road  
Source: author's own image 19.2.2008  
Ashburnham House has been demolished, but the remaining Lodge is impressive, a reminder of the large areas acquired for Victorian developments.

The London Road housing in Patcham peters out south, at the village school opened in 1877, but by the early years of the 20th century the village was looking across to the fringe of Brighton villa-dom. Patcham Place set in its wooded park was an ancient pile re-modelled in the 18th century, the home of resident gentry, but it was soon to be within sight of suburban villas whose occupants were to swell the gentry list of the local directories. In 1862 Patcham's list of gentry as listed in the Kelly's directory, amounted to seven addresses, three in the village and four in the southern hamlet of Withdean; by the 1909 edition this seven had grown to 31; indicating Brighton's suburban growth across the Borough boundaries, into the well-wooded London Road valley, and the pine fringed Downland ridge along Dyke Road. The trade directories' use of the term 'gentry' covered not just titled personages but increasingly anyone not involved in 'trade', as the upwardly and physically mobile middle classes moved into Patcham, the social and built landscape was changing. The Victorian and Edwardian villas spilling north out of Preston were changing both the physical appearance of the highway and the local economy; Kelly's directory of 1909 illustrates the change in the landscape with an impressive list of suburban house names -

'Fairhaven, Ballantrae, Abbingsworth, Wychcote, Stanton Lodge, Herons Court, Furze Court, The Cot, The Priory, Cransley Lodge, The Den, Redholm, the Pynes, Hazlehurst, Ashburnham.'<sup>121</sup>

'Ashburnham' commanded a prime location atop the Mill Ridge in well wooded grounds, with a fine gate-lodge on the main road below (fig 11). The new dwellings and their assemblage of service buildings spread over wide areas of former agricultural landscape having an impact on agricultural employment opportunities. New work was available to the local population with the expansion of Patcham 'villadom', a diversity of employment opportunity not previously available on any but a very limited scale; a fact recalled by the retiring head of Patcham School in the 1920s, when he referred to -

'...the children of coachmen, gardeners and butlers who resided on the small estates of commuters using Preston Park station.'<sup>122</sup>

By the end of the 19th century the suburban growth of Brighton had ensnared the smaller parish of Preston and the outermost tentacles of development were reaching the southern fields of Patcham along the London Road valley and pushing up onto the downland spurs. This was more than an attempt to ensure a 'fair prospect' for the occupants on the rising

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<sup>121</sup> *Kelly's Directories 1862, 1909*

<sup>122</sup> Ryman E and Mead G (1992) *Glimpses of old Patcham* p29

slopes, the valley bottom contained a strong 'winterbourne' that frequently flooded and even causes problems for the residents in the 21st century. A press item of 1925 noted -

'...a stream of water 6 feet wide in places...flowed down the western side of the main (London) road this week. Villas between Withdean and Patcham which have cellars are also affected by the surplus water. On Tuesday water from burst springs was flowing down the main London Road south of Patcham in greater volume than in the previous day and there was a continuous stream from a hundred yards south of Patcham School to within a like distance of the Preston boundary - a mile of water.'<sup>123</sup>

The numbers of domestic staff in these Victorian villas cushioned the downturn in the local agricultural economy; these staff were recalled by a resident of Elms Lea, London Road, Patricia Reilly who remembered in the early 1930s -

'...four gardeners...and the head gardener...Booty the chauffeur...the cook, the house-maid, the scullery maid, the parlour maid, my nursemaid, my nanny.'<sup>124</sup>

Prior to World War One the village had been effectively linked to Brighton by two long skeins of villa development, through the well-wooded London Road valley into the hamlet of Withdean and along the breezier, pine-clad, Dyke Road ridge to the west. The dramatic increase in the housing stock in this area can be seen in its wider context by reference to the detailed lists of new properties that had been granted permission to be built, contained in the annual report of the Brighton Medical Officer of Health, in the early years of the 20th century, Dr Arthur Newsholme -

'During 1903 the Borough Surveyor informs me that 725 new dwelling houses were passed by the Town Council as compared with 551 in 1902...Preston Park 305, Preston 162...[compared to] St. Johns parish 4, West Ward 6.'<sup>125</sup>

These latter were 'inner-city' districts, respectively north-east and north-west of the Old Town area of central Brighton, and the contrast between their new housing numbers and those developing north along the London Road valley is marked. The London Road villas were home to much Metropolitan wealth, with JJ Savage, a West End jeweller at Tower House and Thomas Ronald a partner in the Ritz Hotel and the chairman of the Canadian Pacific Railway at Elms Lea.<sup>126</sup> Linking the two main suburban thrusts was an area now known as Valley Drive - but then Reynolds Avenue, Withdean - a winding tree lined thoroughfare of Edwardian redbrick and tile-hung properties, with truly suburban names such

<sup>123</sup> *Brighton Gazette* 17.1.1925 p2

<sup>124</sup> Montford (2004) pp21-22

<sup>125</sup> *Brighton Medical Officer of Health [MOH]report* 1904 p9

<sup>126</sup> Montford (2004) pp21-25

as 'The Lilacs' 'The Woodlands' 'Sunny Cot' and 'The Gables'.<sup>127</sup> Their occupants were the business community of the bustling resort to the south, being the home of such commercial luminaries as FF Flynn owner of a large dry-cleaning chain living at Withdean Grange, built in the 1860s; George Augustus Riddlesdorffer a seafront furrier, and Ernest Henry Mead - my grandfather - owner of extensive auction rooms and a large furniture removals business.<sup>128</sup> However the appearance of much of the parish was still one of an agricultural community, at the suburbanising southern end of the village, was a small dairy enterprise at Elm Farm and the Withdean Nursery. The two large sheep/corn farms, at Patcham Court and Place Farm still dominated the appearance and economy of the rest of the parish. Further north in the shadow of Sweet Hill, Waterhall Farm was an outlier of the agricultural component.

'Over the one hundred years from about 1780 to 1880 sheep-corn farming on the South Downs was in its heyday. It helped to feed and clothe the sharply rising population...so assisting, by greatly increasing the supply of home-grown food, to relieve the threat to national security from rising food imports...'<sup>129</sup>

Hall and Russell writing in 1911 give a good idea of the nature of the Sussex downland -

'It is the stretch of chalk which extends from the east of the Arun to the sea a Beachy Head which forms the true down country of gently swelling rounded hills with open sheep walk of the most elastic turf on the heights and great unenclosed arable fields round the homesteads in the hollows.'<sup>130</sup>

The soils at Saddlescombe, barely two miles west from Patcham, they describe as 'flinty arable loam'.<sup>131</sup> These large downland estates were noted as having on their arable acreages a half of the area under corn crops, still following the traditional sheep and corn, with a fifth in rotation grasses and the remainder under a variety of other crops.<sup>132</sup> During the period from the mid-1890s to just prior to the First World War there was a 22% drop in gross farm output throughout Sussex [only slightly better than the highest output change for Kent at 26%].

Rents dropped in the same period by 11.5 %.<sup>133</sup>

'Apart from a brief spell during and after the Great War, the period between the late 1870s and the late 1930s is generally described as one of agricultural depression: or at any rate, compared with the 'Golden Age' (1850-75) ...one of slow growth and low profitability.'<sup>134</sup>

<sup>127</sup> ESRO C/C 70/206 Electoral Roll 1918

<sup>128</sup> Montford (2004) p19; Farrant 1985 p42; ESRO C/C 70/206 1918

<sup>129</sup> Brandon (1998) p102

<sup>130</sup> Hall A and Russell E (1911) *A report on the agriculture and soils of Kent, Surrey and Sussex* p11

<sup>131</sup> Hall and Russell p169

<sup>132</sup> Holderness and Mingay (in Collins ed 2000) *The agrarian history of England and Wales*) p370 Farming regions: The south and south east

<sup>133</sup> Collins (in Collins ed) p218-9

<sup>134</sup> Collins (in Collins ed) p208



## The landownership pattern



Fig 12  
The estate of Mrs Grace Paine [of Patcham Place] 1811  
Source: ESRO<sup>135</sup>

Patcham Place in its park can be discerned near the centre of the map on the fold.

*'The cause is this, the great, the big bull frog grasps all. In this beautiful island every inch of land is appropriated by the rich'.* (1823)<sup>136</sup>

'Landowners were at or near the beginning of a chain, or web, of decisions and activities leading to the creation of suburbs. Without those willing to sell land for development or to undertake development themselves the process of suburban extension could not have begun'<sup>137</sup>

<sup>135</sup> ESRO AMS 3434 Paine estate map

<sup>136</sup> Cobbett p206

<sup>137</sup> Whitehand & Carr (2001b) p85



The comment by Whitehand and Carr above accords well with the situation in Patcham where the parish landownership was in the tradition of the South Downs, three large estates dividing up the land. This landownership pattern was one that led to such parishes being designated 'Close' communities, where a few families might control virtually all the land in the parish and from this there followed enormous power, exercised by a limited number of people. The high downland of the northern and eastern part of Patcham was held by the Abergavenny estate, lords of the manor since 1439, but absentee and living at Eridge Park.<sup>138</sup> The Paine/Kemp estate centred on the village was administered from the adjacent Patcham Place; the family of Kemp were major landowners in the district being in possession of lands and properties in the towns of Brighton and Lewes and in more rural areas of Sussex including Hurstmonceux Place and Dale Park, Arundel. Thomas Kemp had been MP for Lewes as was his son Thomas Read Kemp, who inherited the family fortune, before losing it all with the development of the Brighton suburb of Kemp Town. TR Kemp's sister, Grace, married Colonel John Paine of Patcham Place, uniting two local dynasties of landowners<sup>139</sup>.

The Roe/Curwen estates completed the picture, occupying the wooded London Road valley bordering Preston to the south.<sup>140</sup> In 1794 the south of the parish in the Withdean area, was bought by a London civil servant, William Roe,<sup>141</sup> who laid out many of the present day tree belts as 'gentleman's fair prospects'. Roe's descendant, Lady Elizabeth Ogle and her son-in-law and grandson E and EC Curwen<sup>142</sup> sold off plots of land along the highway, which were developed as highly desirable, well-wooded plots of substantial Victorian housing.<sup>143</sup> The main suburbanisation of the London Road valley can be dated from November 1869 when a railway station on the main London line opened in Preston.<sup>144</sup> From the 1870s the major landowner in the adjacent Preston parish was Ellen Stanford, who was developing land under strict covenants, as solid Victorian suburbia, giving an impetus to develop land further up the valley in Patcham, yet more distant from the expanding resort.<sup>145</sup> This was a process observed by Whitehand and Carr -

'Estate owners who would often have retained an interest in the development of their land and in maintaining and enhancing its subsequent value, frequently granting

<sup>138</sup> *National Gazetteer* (1867) p168; *Victoria County History* vVII p216; ESRO DB file preface

<sup>139</sup> ESRO HOP 44/3

<sup>140</sup> Horsfield p173

<sup>141</sup> Thomas-Stanford C (1928) *The private memorandums of William Roe* p38

<sup>142</sup> Montford S (1996) *The vanishing villas of Preston and Withdean* p18

<sup>143</sup> Farrant (1985) p33-6

<sup>144</sup> Clark R (1974) *Southern Region, chronology and record* p83

<sup>145</sup> Farrant (1985) p31

leases rather than selling the freehold, in the twentieth century more often disposed of their land outright.’<sup>146</sup>

By the end of the century Patcham was linked to the town of Brighton by a string of red-brick villas, a horse-bus service aiding access to the resort, and the growth of housing in the parish has to be considered in relation to its neighbours and to other communities in the environs. The rapid and continuing expansion of Brighton across its administrative boundaries, had led to the absorption of Preston in 1873,<sup>147</sup> bringing housing in the form of up-market ribbon development along the London Road, to - and across - the parish boundary with Patcham. This major highway, running as it does still, through a wooded and picturesque valley, was highly favoured for the erection of substantial houses, mostly in red Sussex brick with terracotta decoration, the whole replete with gates, lodges, garden cottages, gazeboes and gravel drives.<sup>148</sup> The opening of the Preston Park station on the London line, just south of Withdean, added to the desirability of the area for those needing to commute -

‘The railway station...has been erected on the London and Brighton main line, for the accommodation of the suburban districts of Preston, Withdean and Patcham...’<sup>149</sup>

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were certainly large components of continuity apparent in the local landscape, but the change was evident in the growth of suburban villas bringing diversity to employment and services. As will be seen, this aspect of the community lifecycle, as incipient suburbia, became an early example of the massive growth that was to occur in the interwar period; in perspective, a progression in the stages from agriculture to avenues.

The development of the London Road valley south of the village was a precursor to much of the post-First World War building sequence in that it was not a linear progression from the existing urban fringe, rather a random scattering along the main road gradually infilling as land was sold and the desirability of the wooded valley grew. This was a pattern that would continue well into the 1930s until the large scale developments of the corporate estates dominated the landscape. ‘[Built] in the 1860s Miramichi stood in over two acres of land.’<sup>150</sup> The large property to the west of the road on the northern edge of the map (fig13) was Withdean Court, erected in 1871 for Lady Eliza Ogle, grand-daughter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century landowner William Roe. This was bordered to the south by Flinn’s Withdean Grange. On the

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<sup>146</sup> Whitehand and Carr (2001b) p85

<sup>147</sup> Farrant J and S p3

<sup>148</sup> Montford (1996) p1ff

<sup>149</sup> Montford (2004) p41

<sup>150</sup> Montford (1996) p19

opposite side of the road, the west facing properties were erected even earlier, in the late 1850s or early 1860s. Withdeane Hall built in 1861 was home to the exotic Count Eric Stenbock, of Estonian extraction -

‘... renowned for his eccentric and hedonistic behaviour...a writer of dark and morbid poetry...drunk and furious...a friend of Yeates and Oscar Wilde....’<sup>151</sup>

Clearly, 19<sup>th</sup> century suburban Patcham had aspects of it far removed from the view described by the archetypal suburbanite, Charles Pooter - ‘Home Sweet Home’ that’s my motto.’<sup>152</sup>



Fig 13

Withdean, Patcham.

Source: 1875 OS 6" map (section)

The London Road south of Patcham village with its named properties, glazed extensions, extensive grounds, wooded and winding approaches, gazebos, stable-blocks and gate-lodges. The suburbia of the late 19th century, which has survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century in a particular form; the houses are all gone, only the lodges and the well wooded landscape features survive.

<sup>151</sup> Montford (1996) p14

<sup>152</sup> Grossmith G and W p13

## Agricultural change



Fig 14  
The might of US Agriculture  
Source: advertising poster 1878<sup>153</sup>

*'The main causes why so many acres have gone out of grain cultivation and others have steadily retreated to more advantageous land have been the relatively rising costs of production at home of which wages form the greatest item and the competition of imported corn from overseas' (1939)<sup>154</sup>*

In the last quarter of the 19th century the Patcham economy was still heavily dependent on the historic agricultural pattern of sheep and corn, with pockets of urban-destined dairy, hay and market garden produce. This pattern though was in sharp decline; after the cessation of the American Civil War in 1865 there were heavy imports of cheap North American grain

<sup>153</sup> Johnson M (1985) *The Wild West* p79

<sup>154</sup> Astor V & Seebom Rowntree B (1939) *British agriculture: the principles of future policy* p109



into the UK. The rapidly increasing tide of grain saw much of the arable land of South East England revert to grazing, farming families moved from the pastoral West of England into the South East taking advantage of the differential in land values.<sup>155</sup> In Patcham the 1901 census shows the origins of the farming community, the Paul family moved up from Bradford Abbas Dorset, to Patcham Court Farm, the Stays at Patcham Place farm had moved into the parish from Somerset by 1901, at Elm Farm and Tongdean Farm both in the south of the parish, the farmers were from Wiltshire and Gloucestershire respectively, across the Downs in Plumpton Green the Middletons moved in from Market Drayton, Shropshire as farm managers at Lentrige Farm, and in nearby Ditchling the Widdecombes - appositely named - had arrived from Devon. The Passmores similarly moved from Devon in 1901 and still farm on the Downs above Lancing, West Sussex, in the 21st century.<sup>156</sup>

Sussex agriculture had several strands to its structure: corn and sheep have already been mentioned, but cattle breeding especially of the native Sussex breed, and cattle fattening, hens and eggs, fruit and hops were all substantial employers and contributors to the whole agricultural economy. By the 1880s new freezer technology meant the London docks were receiving shiploads of frozen meat, mutton from Australia and New Zealand, beef from Argentina and Uruguay; new chilling techniques saw increased imports of dairy goods from more modern and hygienic dairies in Denmark and New Zealand. Canned fruit came from all round the Empire and the USA, promoted by vigorous advertising and the expanding national chains such as Sainsburys and the appositely named International Food Stores, Worlds Tea Stores and the Home and Colonial. Eggs from more modern and organised French poultry farms in Normandy and Brittany flooded the UK markets.<sup>157</sup> All conjoined to drive down demand for UK products, and those from the south east especially corn and livestock, suffered badly, as also did the smaller crops, locally important, such as eggs, poultry and fruit. This import pattern is reflected in the range of -‘food surrendered as unsound’- and seized by the local health authorities, which shows an astonishing list of imported foodstuffs, some of which were staples of the Sussex agricultural economy. The Brighton Medical Officer Health records in the 1919 annual report -‘Eggs - English, Irish, American, Canadian, Danish, Italian, Chinese’.<sup>158</sup> To which collection was added in 1920/21 -‘Eggs - Egyptian,

<sup>155</sup> Perry P (1974) *British farming in the great depression 1870-1914: an historical geography* p116

<sup>156</sup> Patcham census 1901 RG 13/945; Peter Wells. Unpub.mss.notes of family tree; Ron Harrington pers.comm.19.12.2008; Chris Passmore pers.comm 29.6.2007

<sup>157</sup> Baren M (1996) *How it all began up the high street* p117

<sup>158</sup> *MOH Annual Report 1919* p 40

Dutch, Romanian, Moroccan, South African, Argentine, Syrian'.<sup>159</sup>

With income dropping, farmers could not meet rent demands, estates were forced to drop rents, land values and estate revenues declined, the large landed estates of the south-east were badly hit, workforces declined and essential farm husbandry tasks such as hedging, ditching, thatching and buildings repairs were curtailed; land was increasingly sold to reduce estate costs. Sheail has described this process as - 'The largest change in landownership since the sale of the monastic lands in the sixteenth century'<sup>160</sup>

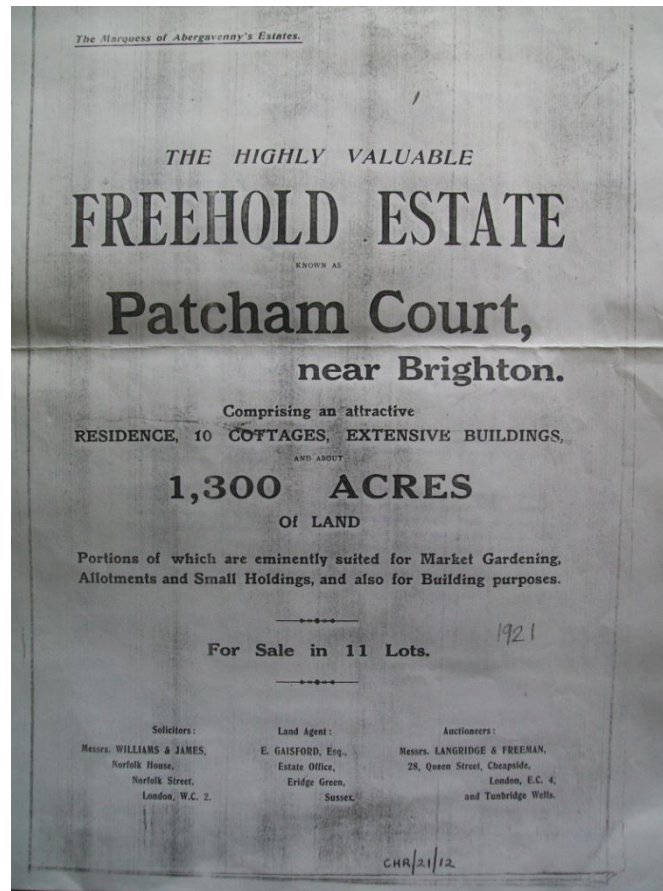


Fig 15  
Patcham Court Farm sale catalogue 1921  
Source: ESRO<sup>161</sup>

The harbinger of change; the move from agriculture to '*Building purposes*'.

<sup>159</sup> MOH 1920 p40; MOH 1921 p33

<sup>160</sup> Sheail J (in Whitehand and Carr (1999a) Morphological periods, planning and reality: the case of England's interwar suburbs *Urban History* v26 n2 p22)

<sup>161</sup> ESRO CHR/21/12 Patcham Court Farm sale catalogue

In East Sussex there were substantial sales by the landowner bordering Patcham to the east, the Chichester estates, which sold off land to the north in Plumpton in 1912 including the moated house Plumpton Place, and to the southeast they also sold the Piddinghoe estate which stretched from the Ouse valley to the coastal cliffs and would be the location of the archetypical plotland, New Anzac-on-Sea, later renamed Peacehaven.<sup>162</sup> The globalisation of agricultural product flows, a topic amongst 21<sup>st</sup> century agriculturalists has an earlier effect than is often credited. The loss of agricultural revenues was not the only factor in this scenario, losses of young officers in the First World War, often the heirs to landed estates, created an inheritance vacuum, and heavy inheritance taxes forced many owners to reduce their holdings. Outside the South East a similar pattern was noted by Fry on the urban fringe of Coventry, at the 'Shack and Track' development of Binley Woods -

'Binley Woods had been part of the estate of the Lords Craven of nearby Coombe Abbey since the seventeenth century, but the whole estate was put up for sale after the premature death of the fourth earl in July 1921. Death duties and a heavy mortgage were the reasons given for the sale.'<sup>163</sup>

With the Abergavenny sale, also in July 1921, a major block of Patcham land came to the market and the further suburbanisation of a substantial acreage could commence. Pre-First World War Patcham was a place that had the elements of continuity and change readily discernible; the agricultural pattern was one that, albeit challenged by world events, was still recognisably that of previous centuries, Sussex long horned oxen worked the fields, horse-drawn wagons lumbered with hay down the valley to Brighton, flocks of sheep tended by lone shepherds, nibbled their way over the gentle slopes of the appropriately named Teg Down and Ewe Bottom.<sup>164</sup> The glazed forcing houses of the Withdean Nursery looked one way to Victorian suburban villas, but to the west still faced a barley crop swelling over the fields of Bramlands Farm.<sup>165</sup> The ownership of the large estates was still intact; their boundaries delineated on estate maps were still those of previous centuries. The village was viewed by the bustling resort to the south as a place of retreat, of views and prospects, tea rooms and shaded gardens for bands of cyclists or the increasingly numerous motorists, pleasant walks on the Downs or along elm-shaded lanes, light ales in the bar parlour of the Black Lion, feeding ducks and geese on the Church Hill pond, visiting the Southdown Hunt and Brookside Harriers gathering at Patcham Place.

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<sup>162</sup> Payne T and Bernard S (2000) *Peacehaven: a chronology* p6

<sup>163</sup> Fry D (2000) Binley Woods: a Warwickshire example of interwar 'Shack and Track' development *Local Historian* v30 n3 p141

<sup>164</sup> Brandon (1998) p130

<sup>165</sup> ESRO Aber Box 2.G Abergavenny estate papers



Fig 16  
 Southdown foxhounds at Patcham April 10<sup>th</sup> 1909  
 Source: Naomi Gorton collection

The old pattern of rural life seems little changed in the early years of the 20th century, and this view would be almost identical for the next 80 years, until the Brighton by-pass interchange completely changed the view. The hunt is heading west up Mill Road, in the distance on the ridge top is Patcham Court farm owned by the Abergavenny estate, their monogrammed terracotta escutcheon can be discerned on the cottage to the left. On the right, the trees of Patcham Place lie within the estate boundary wall of the Paine family's park. The two major estates in the parish meet along Mill Road at this point.

Patcham before the First World War had aspects to it that would have been recognisable to observers from 500 years before; the chalk landscape of the high Downland surrounding the village still had sheep flocks, albeit diminished in size, the more gentle slopes in the dry valleys had crops of wheat and barley, plats of hay were interspersed with small enclosures of cattle. The motive power for many of the farms was still Sussex oxen. Horse traffic using the road through the village still lingered by -and in - the large pond under the elms at the foot of the Droveaway to Lewes. The village built environment, whether labourers' cottage or gentry house was based on the vernacular materials of flint, timber or local brick; the church of All Saints looked down on the flint cottages of Church Hill from its ridge top eminence. Not so apparent to the casual observer was the social landscape; the Abergavenny estate, had held the lordship of the manor since the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century and the area had many of the



characteristics of a 'close' community. These aspects of continuity were to be joined by another set of observations a period of change, constituting a key theme in this research.

The farming community, a mainstay of the local economy, was reflecting the structural shift in British agriculture that was taking place early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The 1901 census for the parish shows that the birthplace of each of the heads of household for the five main farms, all came from out-of-county. In line with other parts of the South East of England these incomers were from stock rearing areas in the west of England. To the south of the village detached villas were appearing amongst the trees of the London Road valley; the workforce for these suburban dwellings was changing the employment structure from one of agricultural labour to domestic service; a situation illustrated in overall employment statistics which show a shift in the workforce from manual/industrial to an increasingly strong 'white-collar' sector.<sup>166</sup> Increased use of motor vehicles meant the village forge of Eli Holder was changing its function to that of a garage (although keeping the name of the Forge Garage until the 21<sup>st</sup> century). Leisure seeking Brightonians were increasingly accessing the village and its surrounds, sampling the rural delights as schoolchildren, cyclists or Scouts, precursors to the flood of new residents that would populate the parish in the following decades. This landscape had many of the features that would have pleased the traditionalist WG Hoskins, a seemingly 'timeless' rural scene; what was to come would not have pleased Hoskins as the plotlands appeared, the bungalows spread, the roads were metalled the filling stations cars and shopping parades multiplied. Yet all these landscape changes, diverse as they were, had their antecedents in the existing landscape, clearly continuity and change.

In the lifecycle of the suburb, the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are important to understand, as they form the basis for the developments of the succeeding years; diverse developments, which when understood would give perspective to the widespread notion of a suburb being an anonymous landscape feature. Huge changes were to come in the appearance of the parish, changes that were mirrored across many parts of the UK, yet much would survive and be recognisable into the 21st century. These changes and the responses to them, local and nationally, form the core of the following chapter.

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<sup>166</sup> Mackenzie SD (1983) *Reproduction of labour in the contemporary city* p163

## Chapter 4

## Preservationists' Concern



Fig 17  
 Dale Avenue and Ladies Mile Estate area.  
 View north-west from Hartfield Avenue, Hollingbury.  
 Source: author's own image 26.3.2007

*'...the destruction of the South Downs by the rapid, haphazard and in some cases entirely unnecessary development that is taking place.'* (1928)<sup>158</sup>

The seemingly chaotic assemblage of much 20<sup>th</sup> century suburbia gave much cause for alarm to the early environmental writers...but not to the occupants.

In the early years of the 20th century the many economic factors that were outlined in chapter 3 were having an impact on the appearance of Patcham, the prosperity of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century agricultural economy was giving way to the depressed farming conditions brought about by heavily increased food imports. The Patcham of country

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<sup>158</sup> ESRO C/C1/7 Brighton, Hove & District Joint Town Planning advisory committee: preliminary report 1928 p52

house and detached Victorian villa, of squire and prosperous businessmen, of fox-hunts and tea gardens was soon to be subsumed under a flood of cheap and still cheaper housing, whose occupants were no longer farm hands or servants but Brighton's service workers and blue-collar elite.

The continuity and change that is a constant of landscape study, took on a sharper note as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century agricultural landscape of Patcham succumbed to the externalities of world agricultural practice, international economics and domestic policies. While the pattern of field and copse, lane and 'twitten' would still be evident in the cartographic evidence, with hedgerows and tree lines still important in the locale, another layer of landscape features were about to be overlaid on them creating a new aspect to the map and view; a further layer within the palimpsest. This layer of landscape, though appearing to many observers, particularly WG Hoskins, as an obliterating process, was in fact reinforcing the pattern of prior land use and ownership. It was part of the lifecycle of the suburb, one adding a facet of diversity through the built environment that has largely been overlooked in the literature of urban development; a facet that gives an alternative perspective to the received view of suburbia. Although this new built landscape was different from the prior agricultural use, it had many elements that linked the past into the suburban present. This process of landscape change, seemingly replaced one with another, rural to urban; however closer observation reveals that the diversity of the built environment was directly related to the prior patterns of landholding and land use. The interwar colonies of Hardy and Ward's plotlands, the avenues of King's bungalows and the estates of Oliver's Dunroamin' semi-detached dwellings adapted themselves to former field boundaries and were named after centuries old field names.

## 4.1

The prelude to preservationist concern; pre 1914

*'The land generally speaking from Deptford to Dartford is poor, and the surface ugly by nature, to which ugliness there has been made, just before we came to this latter place, a considerable addition by the inclosure of a common, and by the sticking up of some shabby-genteel houses, surrounded with dead fences and things called gardens, in all manner of ridiculous forms, making altogether the bricks, hurdle-rods and earth say, as plainly as they can speak 'Here dwell vanity and poverty' '<sup>159</sup>*

William Cobbett (1821)



Fig 18

The Bendigo estate, London Road, Patcham c1925, looking south.

Source: Peter Booth collection

'Vanity and poverty'. One hundred years after Cobbett's comments and 50 miles away, yet echoing his observations on the nature of urban fringe developments on run-down agricultural land.

The environmental concerns that rose to prominence in the 20th century had their origins in the social history of the 19th century and it is to this earlier period that attention must be paid to further comprehend the later one. The effect of the environmental difficulties encountered in late 19th and early 20th century urban districts had an impact on decisions by both individual owners and local authorities in the directional growth and social areas that developed. Housing provision and

<sup>159</sup>Cobbett W (1830) *Rural Rides* p41

adequacy, the changing economic structure of the nation, with a growing middle class and awareness of public health issues, all contributed to a situation of urban growth becoming a significant issue in national and local government policies.

The United Kingdom in the 19th century underwent a continuing process of rapid population growth and change, with a steady and growing movement of the rural population into urban areas, thereby hastening the process of becoming the first urban nation.<sup>160</sup> Post Napoleonic-war recession, falling agricultural prices and harsh living conditions in agricultural areas brought about rural unrest, seen in its most volatile form in the South of England in the ‘Captain Swing’ riots and the Tolpuddle Martyrs protest. Rising rural poverty and urban employment opportunities drove many from rural poverty into urban areas where the rapidly expanding areas of workers’ tenements and terraces quickly degenerated into slums. The most extreme cases of poverty were to be seen in the large cities and the plight of the poor in London has been documented extensively by Gustave Doré in his prints and by Henry Mayhew.<sup>161</sup>

The push-pull effect of economic factors throughout the century made for varying growth patterns in urban areas, and one of the most spectacular examples of growth was that of Brighton, which grew 103% in 1811-21; the fastest rate of growth of a UK urban area in the 19th century, and by 66% over the following decade, creating great problems in provision of adequate housing, and related infrastructure.<sup>162</sup> Brighton’s rapid population growth was mainly in the lowly paid seasonal employment sector, resort and building trades, although the service and retail sectors of the local economy were an important economic facet, commented on by a Brighton guide book of 1826 -

‘The commercial resources of Brighton are not extensive...but the retail trade is considerable from the constant influx of strangers’<sup>163</sup>

Large areas surrounding the superior resort dwellings quickly became working class ghettos, housing migrant labour from rural Sussex and further afield. As early as 1808 a description of Brighton described the northern town edge, its suburb, thus -

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<sup>160</sup> Howkins A (1991) *Reshaping rural England: a social history 1850-1925* p8

<sup>161</sup> Dore A and Jerrold B (1872) *London. A pilgrimage* ; Mayhew H (1862) *London labour and London poor*

<sup>162</sup> *Brighton Corporation handbook* (1931-32) p126

<sup>163</sup> Pigot J (1826) *Guide to Brighton* p690

‘Most of the houses in Church Street are very poor and mean and it has much of the appearance of a suburb or the extremity of a town.’<sup>164</sup>

Census returns from 1851 indicate streets with a high proportion of inhabitants whose birthplace originated outside Brighton, particularly in the rapidly urbanising slopes outside the Old Town. In this area there are several examples to illustrate the nature of the housing stock; Egremont Street running north off Edward Street in the Hilly Laine, had a population of 324 of which 61% were born outside the resort with 20% Irish. It was not a street paved with gold as noted by a health report of 1849 -

‘Egremont Street has 81 houses; all in bad condition. Six houses have recently been pulled down and their site has become the general receptacle of every species of refuse and filth; the cesspools are bad.’<sup>165</sup>

What made the housing stock so overcrowded in Brighton was the landownership pattern of the open fields or ‘Laines’ that bordered the Old Town area. These were areas held in an ancient strip-field system of tiny narrow plots - ‘paul-pieces’ - which militated against large building schemes and ensured that piecemeal development took place, primarily by small builders, keen to maximise the amount of dwellings in any given space. The 20<sup>th</sup> century would see the same process of prior ownership and holdings patterns affecting urban growth. The Hilly Laine to the east of the central valley and a distance from the seafront and fashionable quarters was not suitable for resort housing, and its steepness meant it was unsuitable for commercial activity; this was the district that saw most land given to poor housing, built with chalk blocks, sea-sand and flint cobbles from the beach.

The lure of the urban centres was felt most on the rural parishes on their fringes, and short range migration was an important element in the 19<sup>th</sup> century population decline in rural areas. The 1851 census for Egremont Street shows the parishes near to Brighton - Pyecombe, Keymer and Lewes contributing the greater number of migrants.<sup>166</sup> As the urban areas became more densely packed there was a breakdown in many of the essential services, particularly in the erection of suitable housing and in the provision of fresh water and sewage removal; with outbreaks of severe diseases cholera, typhoid and smallpox in many of the expanding towns, prompting the

<sup>164</sup> Brown J (1808) *The town of St Brighthelm or Brighton* p8

<sup>165</sup> Cressey E (1849) *Report to the general Board of health on the town of Brighton* p14

<sup>166</sup> Brighton Census 1851 reel 22 HO 107 Brighton History Centre



government to insist on larger local authorities employing Medical Officers of Health. The sanitary conditions of the packed streets were not helped by the diverse usage of new working class districts; Dr Keeble in his report on Brighton noted in 1848 -

‘There are some slaughterhouses in Paradise Street - a densely populated neighbourhood. The neighbouring poor have complained to me of the scents proceeding from them, especially in summer, and in hot and dry weather.’<sup>167</sup>

Keeble’s account has resonance with the first recorded use of the term ‘suburb’ in English literature, from Wycliff’s Works c1380 -

‘They had suburbs to feed there the beasts that should be offered sacrifice to god in the temple.’<sup>168</sup>

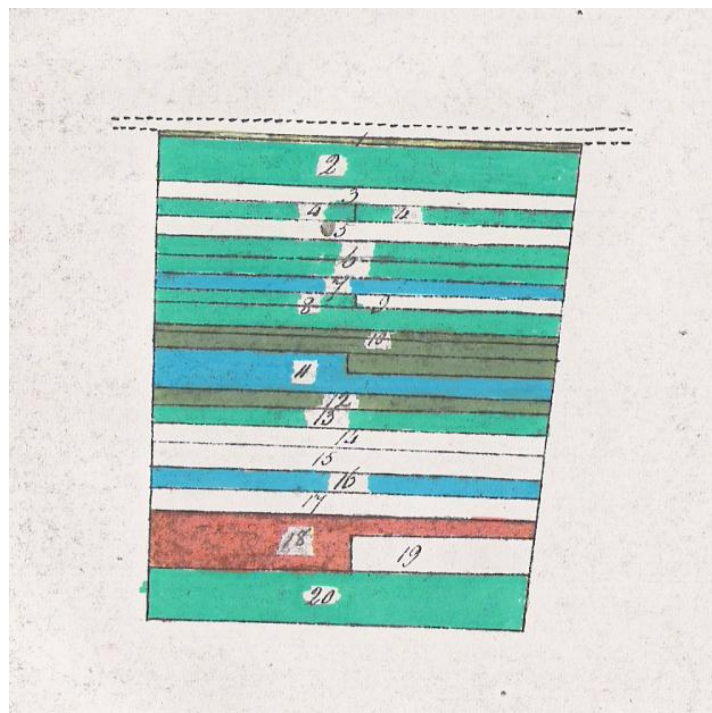


Fig 19  
Brighton, East Laine, Sixth furlong.1792<sup>169</sup>  
Source: Budgen

The narrow ‘paul-pieces’ or field strips only allowed for cramped housing to be erected; Paradise St was built over paul-piece number 3, Laurel Row lay along number 18, the Duke of Dorset owned Paradise St. Sluggers Buildings lay over the short block, number 19, owned by the absentee landlord, Benjamin Masters of Watchet, Somerset<sup>170</sup>  
Sandwiched between the aforementioned Paradise St. and Sluggers Buildings lay - ‘Essex Place, 7 houses pulled down, site paved over.’<sup>171</sup>

<sup>167</sup> Keeble W (1848) *On the diseases of towns* p168

<sup>168</sup> Wycliff (in OED vol XVII p86)

<sup>169</sup> Budgen p19

<sup>170</sup> Budgen p20

<sup>171</sup> MOH 1895 p35

In the following year 1849, sanitary engineer Edward Cresey compiled a detailed report on the condition of the resort, with a street-by-street analysis; his view of Paradise Street was not too far removed from that of Keeble the year before -

‘The pigs are much complained of; and the privies are out of order.’<sup>172</sup>

Paradise Street lay in the - ‘Sixth Furlong from the new broke ground’ - of the East Laine, a particularly densely peopled neighbourhood, one block removed from the patrician mansions of the Kemp Town seafront.<sup>173</sup> Five streets south of Paradise Street, less than 100 yards away, lay the grimly named ‘Slugger’s Buildings’ -

‘These dwellings are sensibly affected by the pigs kept in the yards of the houses in Laurel Row. One house is now occupied by Mrs Martin and five children; the whole family were [sic] suffering from sickness, in consequence of the ill-drained condition of the house. The stables which adjoin are very offensive, and the matter oozes through her wall.’<sup>174</sup>

In 1872, nearly 25 years after these reports, the Brighton Mendicity Society (formed to co-ordinate poor relief in Brighton) reported on Sarah Foster aged 67, the occupant of 36 Paradise Street - ‘a resident of 40 years in the parish.’ The inspector commented that - ‘I...find her home in a destitute state.’<sup>175</sup> The street re-appeared in a Corporation report of 1889 - *Work undertaken for the Housing of the Working Classes* - where it was described thus - ‘the entrance to the space in front of Paradise Street was only 8 feet wide.’<sup>176</sup> Ironically, but only too typically, Paradise Street was in the ownership of Brighton’s second biggest landowner the Duke of Dorset.<sup>177</sup>

Such perils of urban life were pushing the middle classes away from the city -

‘... in the early 19th century, as the newly emergent English middle classes began to seek residences removed from the environmental nuisances that they themselves had brought into being.’<sup>178</sup>

This would create a process which accelerated as the 20th century wore on and urban areas expanded into the rural surrounds. Research on the suburb of London Road near St Peter’s church, new in 1828, suggests a clear picture of urban middle-class migration, with wealthy traders from central Brighton, including a furrier, a wine-

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<sup>172</sup> Cresey p 14

<sup>173</sup> Budgen T (1792) *Terrier of the Tenantry Laines or Common Fields of the parish of Brighthelmstone* p19; Carder T (1990) *Encyclopaedia of Brighton* fig 55

<sup>174</sup> Cresey p13

<sup>175</sup> *Brighton Mendicity Society* documents (ESRO un-catalogued)

<sup>176</sup> Lintott J (1908) *How Brighton is kept healthy* p117

<sup>177</sup> Budgen p10

<sup>178</sup> McManus R and Ethington P (2007) *Suburbs in transition: new approaches to suburban history* p320



merchant, a chemist, and a member of 'Her Majesty's Household' all residing in new (post 1826) housing on the then edge of town.<sup>179</sup> The geography of the Old Town had it hemmed in by the English Channel to the south, with poor housing clustering close to the centre; new housing could only be located by leap-frogging the encircling rookeries and slums, and building in the 'greenfield' sites on the urban fringe. Middle class housing appeared in the grazing grounds, market gardens and orchards north of the town. As the coastal areas west and east were developed in grandiose schemes at Brunswick Town and Kemp Town, the fields north of the town and away from the sea views, developed a range of middle-class accommodation. The social geography of Brighton thus assumed a solid middle-class wedge directed north. The topography of this area of the town, is a large valley, dividing into two north of the Old Steine; the western valley containing the London Road becoming the middle class route out of town, the eastern valley - the Lewes Road - eventually becoming the 'East End'.

By the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the dense population of the borough gave it an unenviable position in the national statistics, Brighton being the second most densely populated borough after West Ham. This was part of a social situation not far removed from the 21st century when south coast resorts regularly appear high in lists of urban deprivation. The overall figures for the borough hide the finer picture as seen from the 1894 Brighton MOH report in Table 1, the central wards of St Peter, St Johns and Hanover are in stark contrast to the suburban areas of Preston Park and Preston. It was in St Johns ward, not the most densely populated, but one with the worst standard of housing, that the early clearances took place under the 'Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890' as example this passage from the MOH report -

'The following premises are in a state so dangerous to health as to be unfit for human habitation -

Claremont Row - 8 houses; put into thorough repair-5, demolished-2  
 Carlton Row - 1 house closed  
 Carlton Hill - 2 houses closed and pulled down  
 Thomas Street - 1 house closed and pulled down.'

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<sup>179</sup> Mead G (1986) 'The retail trade is considerable' *Sussex Archaeological Society Newsletter* n45 p430

Ward	Pop. per acre
Preston Park	10
Preston	16
Kemp Town	16
St Peters	163
Hanover	151
St. John's	147
Pier	146
St Nicholas	142
Regency	109

Table 1  
Brighton wards population 1894  
Source: Brighton Medical Officer of Health report<sup>180</sup>

These figures from 1894 were among the first attempts by the local authority to tackle the poverty stricken dwellings that lay across large areas of east Brighton. The work of the MOH at this time, Dr Arthur Newsholme, has been extensively covered in a Sussex D.Phil thesis.<sup>181</sup> Few illustrations exist of these pre 20<sup>th</sup> century clearances and the work of the 19<sup>th</sup> century London artist Gustave Dore is often employed to illustrate their character, however Cresey's 1849 report carries a single image of one notorious district Brighton slum, Carlton Row (fig 20).

The Carlton Hill area east of the Victoria Gardens developed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as working class housing, rapidly deteriorating into slums; this area, Brighton's 'Lower East Side', was birthplace of the gangsters in Graham Greene's interwar novel *Brighton Rock*. In the north of the map (fig 21) St Peter's Church is the divide between the middle class London Road to the west and working class Lewes Road to the east. The 20<sup>th</sup> century would see private ownership suburbia along the former and large council estates and factories along the latter. This is a classic example of sectoral growth, wherein the housing follows route ways from a central core, wealthier along the western valley, poorer along the eastern; culminating in Brighton's case with suburbs of similar age but variant social class at Patcham and Moulsecoomb. The diversity of the suburbs linked back to the earlier urban landscapes of rich and poor, continuity within a lifecycle of urban growth.

<sup>180</sup> MOH 1894 p9

<sup>181</sup> Nagashima T (2001) *A .Newsholme and English public health administration 1888-1919 Sussex* D.Phil unpub.

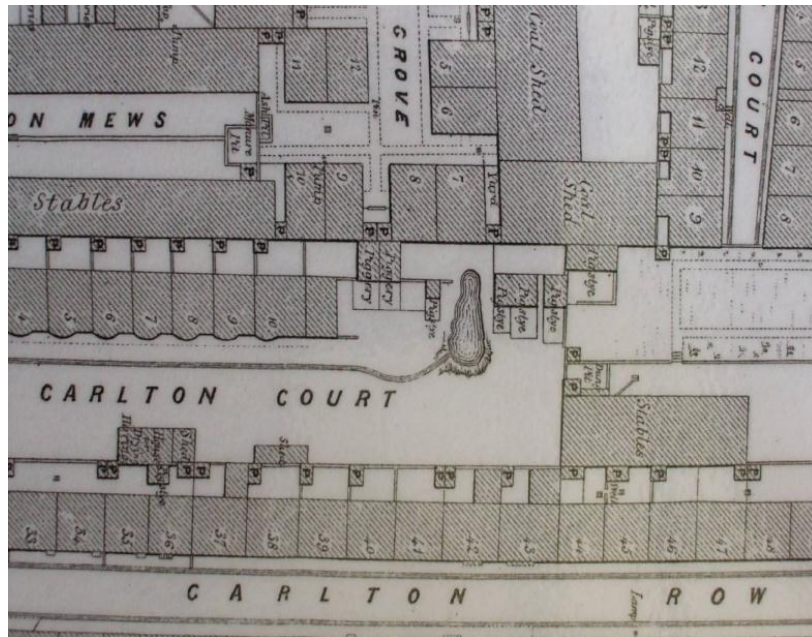
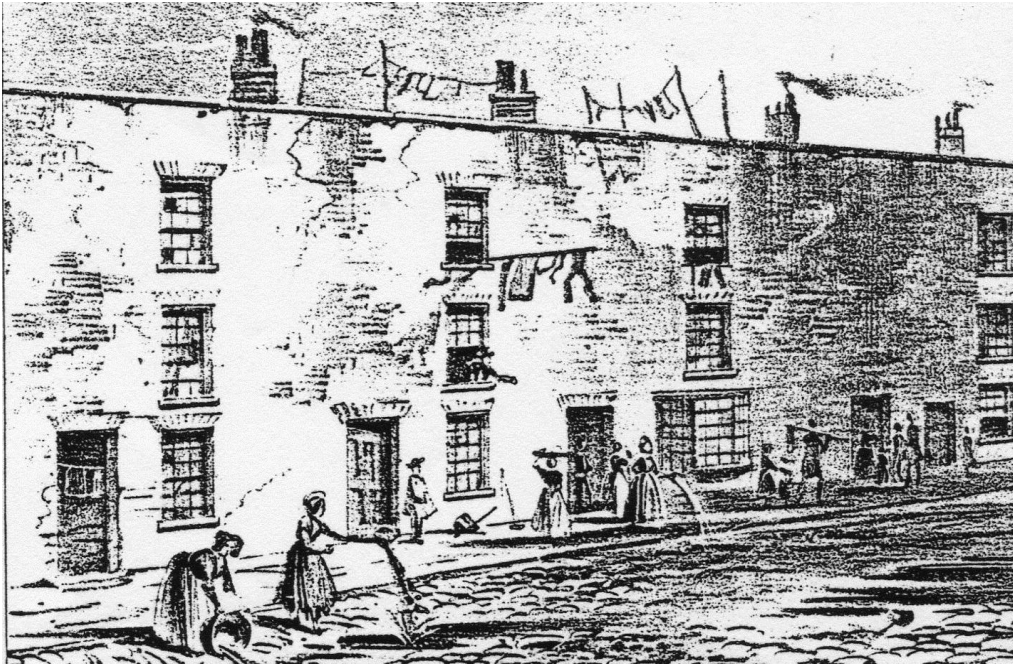


Fig 20

Carlton Row, Brighton 1849

Source: Report to the General Board of Health

*'...fever rages in the locality. Several houses are mere ruins...'*<sup>182</sup>

The packed multi-occupancy dwellings of the Carlton Hill area, the clothes drying on the roofs and on the front drying pole, attest to the lack of ground floor open space for the basic female working class activity of 'taking in washing'. Carlton Hill was the resort's worst slum, largely cleared in the 1930s, and still in the 21<sup>st</sup> century evokes comments of either domestic squalor, or neighbourhood solidarity.

<sup>182</sup> Cressey p15



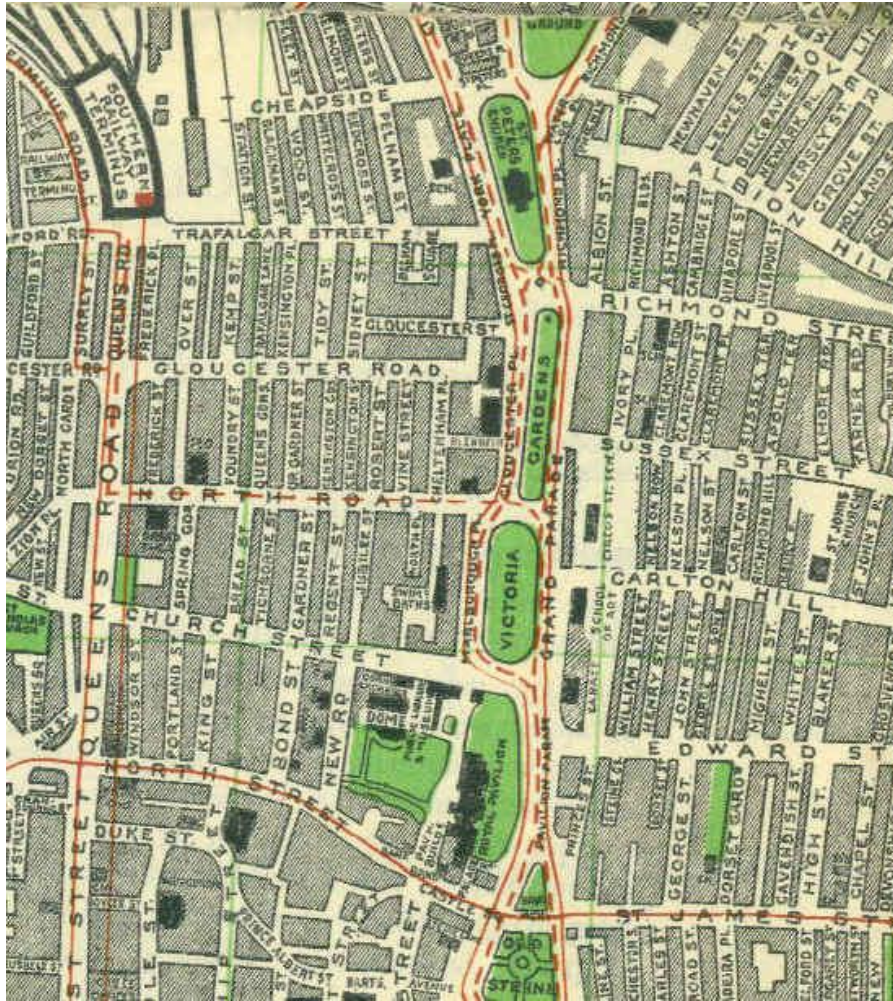


Fig 21

Brighton town centre

Source: Brighton tourist guide 1935

The packed streets of central Brighton which developed rapidly on the old strip fields in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, making the Borough the second most densely packed in the UK by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>183</sup>. Carlton Row (fig 20) lay along the open space at the west end of Carlton Hill.

The economy of the borough was heavily influenced by its function as the country's leading holiday destination, the overall picture of Brighton trade was resort related, with extensive and wealthy, retail, service, leisure and finance sectors. This led to a high proportion of service and white-collar workers in the local economy and it was this cohort that was seeking to escape the cramped streets of central Brighton. Dr Duncan Forbes, the new Medical Officer of Health writes in his first report in 1919 -

‘The staple industry of Brighton is catering for visitors by hotels and boarding houses and apartment letting (lodging house keepers, females 1,487). In

<sup>183</sup> MOH 1926 p6

consequence the laundry work done in Brighton is in excess of that done in other towns; also there is a greater number of domestic servants (7,977 females). Brighton is a shopping centre for Central Sussex (shops males 7,663. females 6,400) it is also a distributing centre.<sup>184</sup>

The push of squalid urban centres, the growth of service and white collar trades, improvements in road building and the increase in public transport, meant that increasing numbers could move away from city centres to greenfield sites on their fringes. In each decade enough of the residents moved to see social changes occur; the pattern is one of urban change, generated from residents upgrading to the newer suburbs being replaced by tenants of a lower social standing, in direct contrast to the gentrification processes of the 21st century.

By 1840 the whole valley roadside to the Preston parish boundary was developed, and after 1870 when the Stanford lands started to be sold, the terraced ribbon development extended to the Preston railway viaduct, and then beyond, in a series of three storey semi-detached villas set in wooded grounds (fig 23).<sup>185</sup> In spite of the physical rundown of the buildings of central areas of Brighton and the concentration of the working classes and middle classes into distinct neighbourhoods, some of the residual population of the inner city looked to the burgeoning suburbs for their financial security. The electoral rolls for the interwar years for Preston and Patcham show plots of land held by the shopkeepers and publicans of the central area, possibly as a form of insurance in a time of precarious world finance.<sup>186</sup> Throughout the period under review there has been a steady link between the city and its suburbs, one that was reinforced with the migration of families to the urban fringe, and the familial and commercial linkages are a constant feature of the suburban growth of Patcham.

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<sup>184</sup> *MOH* 1919 p5

<sup>185</sup> Farrant 1985 p37

<sup>186</sup> ESRO C/C70/206 Electoral Roll Patcham Autumn 1920

## Twentieth century preservationist issues



*'Since the war circumstances have combined to encourage building on and near the Downs. The demand for houses throughout the country, the popularity of this district in particular, the impoverishment of the owners and heavy death duties are all factors contributing to 'the development' that has been taking place on haphazard lines and in varying degrees of intensity during the last ten years.'*<sup>187</sup>

Countess of Chichester et al (1929)

Fig 22

Bendigo estate, London Road, Patcham looking east from Sweet Hill, c1930

Source: Mrs M .Verrall

*'Development... on haphazard lines'*

A classic case of plotland ribbon development along a major highway, the main approach to the resort, on land formerly the Abergavenny estate's Court Laine. Stanmer Park woods and Hollingbury hill in the distance.

<sup>187</sup> *Sussex County Magazine [SCM]* vol 3 June 1929 Notes and News of The Society of Sussex Downsmen p504

<sup>187</sup> ESRO C/C70/206 Electoral Roll Patcham Autumn 1920

<sup>187</sup> *SCM* vol 3 June 1929 Notes and News of The Society of Sussex Downsmen p504

Government responses to the housing issues grew in importance throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the population moved from a largely rural one to a concentration in fewer, larger urban centres. The initial move was to improve the general public health, arising from a series of largely urban disease events, especially cholera, in the 1840s. A 'Commission on Health in Towns' was established leading to the 1848 Public Health Act, the first of a series, which by 1914 ensured rudimentary services in urban areas, of street cleansing, good water, sewerage and enforcement of space standards. Clearance of slum housing under the Torrens Act 1868 and the Cross Act 1875 presaged a Royal Commission into Working Class Housing in 1884 which saw good housing as a panacea for a range of social problems, and was the beginning of a raft of housing legislation that meant the state, along with private individuals became involved in housing provision. The Housing of the Working Classes Act in 1885 and again in 1890 consolidated and extended earlier acts and set the scene for large scale council housing building and improvements; this act was only 'permissive' while the later 1919 act was 'obligatory'.<sup>188</sup> The Town Planning Act 1909 amended the law relating to the housing of the working class and provided for town planning schemes. Housing Acts in 1919, 1923 and 1924 provided for varying subsidies to encourage the building of new houses for the working classes; the 1923 Act made subsidies available for private owners. The Housing Act 1930 extended subsidies and provided wider powers for slum clearances with the 1933 Act reducing the general subsidies but presented subsidies for slum clearance.<sup>189</sup>

Throughout the interwar period the issue of urban growth, its direction and control, and in particular, suburban growth was one that saw the debate polarised between the notion of 'The City and The Country'. Somewhat uneasily the suburb lay on the battleground front line between the rival factions. Urban areas increased in density of population rather than in areal cover, with the limited amounts of new housing on the urban fringes being that which the expanding middle-class could afford. Working-class housing was largely degraded former middle-class homes and such working-class housing as was provided was in tiny quantities and often through philanthropic bodies or very localised schemes and all in the inner city areas.

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<sup>188</sup> Short JR (1982) *Housing in Britain* p24; Cherry GE (1988) *Cities and plans: the shaping of urban Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries* p84

<sup>189</sup> Butler D and Butler G (2000) *Twentieth century British political facts 1900-2000* p354

During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, horse-bus networks started to appear in some of the larger urban centres and these allowed for limited expansion of suburban houses; the urban physical geography and the limitations of the transport ensured that there was incipient ribbon development, usually along the easily negotiated valley routes, this can be seen clearly in the Brighton suburb of Preston and its northern neighbour Patcham.<sup>190</sup> In the lead-up to the First World War there was an expansion of housing further from the inner city, the populace utilising not just the horse-buses but also railways and the new electric trams in the larger urban areas, a facet of urban growth covered extensively by Jackson in London.<sup>191</sup> The change in transport technology at the end of the 19th century with the use of trams allowed those areas of cities not served by the horse-buses - usually the more hilly quarters - to be colonised by new housing; in Brighton this applied to the roads running steeply from the central valley up onto the ridges of Dyke Road, Ditchling Road and Queens Park.<sup>192</sup>

The relatively slow physical growth of early 20<sup>th</sup> century cities provoked little in the way of criticism at the time, rather the opposite, urban growth being seen as a notion of civic pride, and as early as 1894 the Brighton MOH noted in his annual report -

‘...one of the most desirable objects for Brighton is the extension of its municipal borders and the encouragement of artisans’ dwellings in the outskirts of the town with cheap means of communication. This would do much to diminish overcrowding in the more central parts of the town and to raise the general standard of health of the community.’<sup>193</sup>

The effects of this urban spread were outlined in his 1902 report, foretelling the concerns of the interwar conservationists -

‘The residential parts of Brighton are becoming more and more spread out, some of them having spread over the Municipal boundaries, others on to the hill slopes in the northwest, north and northeast parts of the Borough.’<sup>194</sup>

In 19th century Adelaide, Sigsworth and Warboys found comparisons with Britain -

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<sup>190</sup> Peasgood (in Farrant et al (1981) *The growth of Brighton and Hove 1840-1939*) *Public transport and the growth of Brighton 1840-1940* p45; Montford et al (1996) *passim*

<sup>191</sup> Jackson A (1991) *Semi-detached London: suburban development life and transport 1900-39* pp2-9,49-50

<sup>192</sup> Farrant et al p30

<sup>193</sup> MOH 1894 p10

<sup>194</sup> MOH 1902 p8



‘...cities developed slums close to their centre, where people on low incomes were shoehorned into a dwindling housing stock. Here there was vermin and accumulated refuse, besides an absence of the desired sunlight and fresh air... Middle class suburbs were normally built upwind, on well drained sites freshened by mountain or sea air, that were better serviced and away from such disamenities.’<sup>195</sup>

They further commented on the reaction to this urban environmental crisis -

‘Suburbia supposedly brought to the city the advantages of rural life...in the late 18th century to live at the edge of town (was) seeking refuge from the problems created by increasing crowding of the city centre...suburbs acquired an Arcadian image as safe places for family living; removed from urban crime, immorality and disease.’<sup>196</sup>

	<b>Gt.Britain Houses built'000 Annual average</b>	<b>Investment in dwelling £M 1900 prices</b>	<b>Residential as % of total building</b>	<b>Housing stock Gt.Britain millions. Census dates</b>	<b>% un-occupied houses</b>	<b>Building employment (England &amp; Wales '000)</b>
1870-9	101.0	20.2	56.6		6.1	567
1880-9	79.8	17.2	60.4	6.02	8.0	690
1890-9	107.7	26.0	59.6	6.69	6.8	706
1900-9	130.6	35.2	59.0	7.68	7.2	953
1910-4	61.9	19.2	48.8	8.65	5.7	887

Table 2  
The growth of building in Great Britain before 1914<sup>197</sup>  
Source: after Richardson and Aldcroft

The main concern in cities was the lack of new housing; indeed house building figures for the pre-First World War era show a dramatic slow-down in house completion at the national and local levels, as in Tables 2 and 3. The fluctuations and severe downturn in the national building situation early in the 20th century show clearly in Table 2. The crisis brought about by the slowdown in domestic construction prior to the war had ramifications for the period after the First World War, when the severe shortage of all housing caused a raft of temporary measures to be enacted, and

<sup>195</sup> Sigsworth M and Warboys M (1994) Suburbia and infant death in late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Adelaide *Urban History* v21n2 p252

<sup>196</sup> Sigsworth and Warboys p251

<sup>197</sup> Richardson H and Aldcroft D (1994) *Building in the British economy between the wars* p26

restrictions on dwellings, erected in what were often inappropriate locations, were relaxed. Added to the pre-war housing shortage must be the depredations and lack of maintenance during the First World War. Local government spending was further constrained by the strictures of central government -

‘Over time the difficulties of working in an atmosphere of financial retrenchment almost certainly added to what we might now perceive as civil service caution.’<sup>198</sup>

‘Central and local government had to contend with the ever-changing political and economic situation, which inevitably produced mixed messages and strategies.’<sup>199</sup>

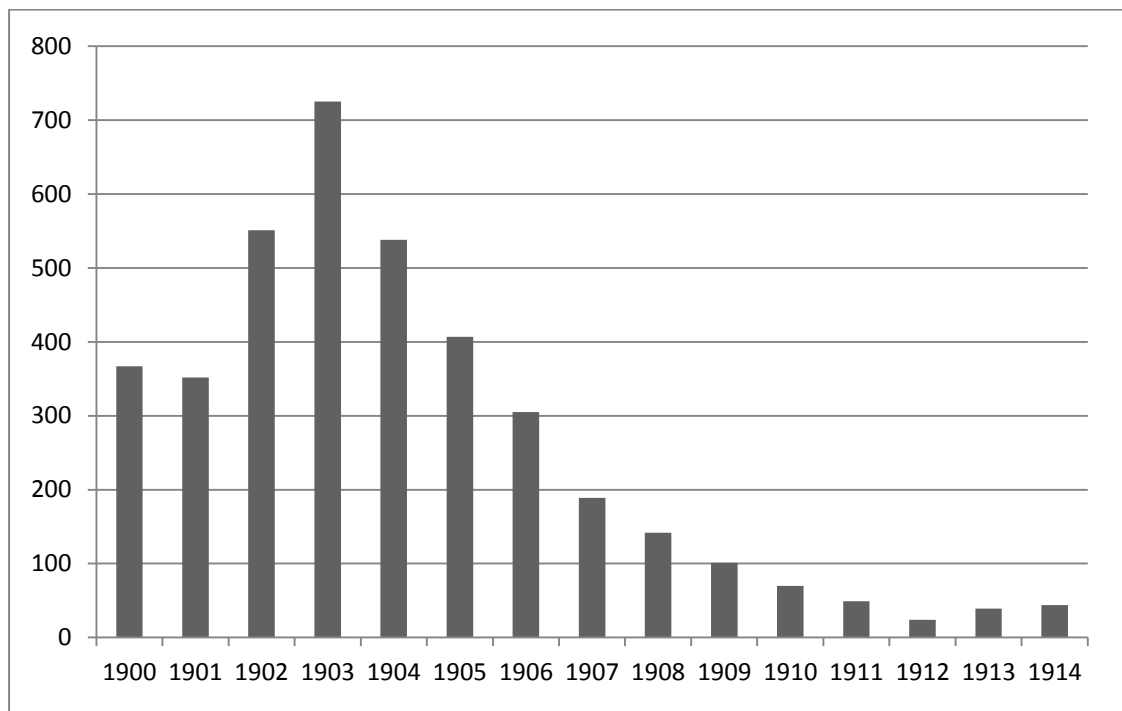


Table 3  
Brighton borough, new houses 1900-1914 <sup>200</sup>  
Source: Brighton Medical Officer of Health reports

The decline in Brighton’s house building during the years before the First World War is apparent from Table 3 and contributed to the post-war housing shortages. Such was the concern over the state of Brighton’s housing that the debate was carried on in the columns of ‘*Brighton and Hove Society*’ a seemingly lightweight, apolitical, leisure weekly. A leading article in May 1920 stated -

<sup>198</sup>Taylor B, Stewart J and Powell M (2007) Central and local government and the provision of municipal medicine 1919-1939 *English Historical Review* v122 n496 p426

<sup>199</sup> Martin A, p118

<sup>200</sup> *MOH annual reports*

‘Frequent and sweeping changes which the housing situation, both national and local has undergone, have left the people of Brighton in a condition of much uncertainty as to how soon the town may expect to be rid of its present housing troubles, which are causing profiteering in rents, widespread ill-health, and terrible overcrowding with it attendant evils...from a mist of details, disorganisation and delay, there emerges from the housing controversy at Brighton one all-important question: *Are the slums to remain?*’<sup>201</sup>

The dramatic decline in house building in Brighton after the peak in 1903 can be explained not just in terms of the wider economic situation. As the available land within the pre-expansion borough was built over, new housing, essentially suburban and middle class was erected in the adjacent administrative neighbourhoods of Preston Rural, Hove and Steyning East. Brighton was increasingly becoming a working class housing area, with the higher rated properties paying their funds into municipal coffers other than Brighton. This process of middle-class flight from the central city has been studied by O’Carroll who noted that not only were white-collar workers making this move but that this process also affected manual workers.<sup>202</sup>

The most densely packed Brighton wards lay along the central valley in the Lewes and London Roads; cramped terraced housing intermixed with industry, workshops, coal yards and stabling; in contrast to the leafy parks, wide tree-lined roads and elegant housing of the outer wards. Dr Newsholme’s report for 1904 contained evidence that the social divide, so obvious in the housing situation of the 19th century was unresolved -

‘...however much building of houses is done in the suburbs, the problem of dealing with insanitary central houses will still remain. Such houses will always be occupied by the very poor.’<sup>203</sup>

Councillor Marten in 1923, commented on ‘Brighton and its housing problem’ -

‘One of the greatest necessities of the day in Brighton and district is the building of more houses and flats for the artisan classes...the living accommodation of hundreds of people in Brighton is appalling.’

Supporting this view was the MOH 1920 report which recorded the total of unfit houses as 3,790 (15%) out of a borough total of 25,581.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>201</sup> *Brighton and Hove Society* 27.5.1920

<sup>202</sup> O’Carroll A (1997) Tenements to bungalows; class and the growth of home-ownership before Second World War *Urban History* v24n10 p 221

<sup>203</sup> *MOH* 1904p7

<sup>204</sup> *Brighter Brighton* 4.8.1923 p1; *MOH* 1920 p55

Jennings' work on early town planning legislation noted the change in housing as a result of a differing economic structure -

'The new problem of planning is in fact an entirely new manifestation...the new middle class consists of 'black coated workers' who are employees, mainly of limited companies and public authorities. They range from company directors to clerks and typists, they all delight in fresh air, open fields and sanitary conditions...the problem now is not to prevent people from crowding together in towns, it is rather to prevent them from scattering themselves about the countryside.'<sup>205</sup>

While the public health benefits of new, space extensive housing was clearly obvious, it was this very growth in urban areas, especially into the sensitive areas of the open downland around Brighton that was to be seen as a major problem in the period after the First World War. The improved transport, reduced costs in building land and cheap imported building materials resulted in an eruption of building, both in the form of standard architect designed dwellings but also a rash of extemporary makeshift dwellings, ranging from ex-army huts to railway carriages, and at Patcham - '...a steel tent for Mr Hunwick.'<sup>206</sup> The downland behind Brighton had a plethora of such habitations many of which were commented upon by the polemic authors of the period; S.P.B. Mais, himself living in some style in Grand Avenue, Hove, walked much of the high downland between Brighton, Newhaven and Lewes and saw -

'At Ovingdean, old buses, railway coaches and bungalows...mercifully hidden along a hillside a mile back from the sea.'<sup>207</sup>

A similar view would be seen further north in neighbouring Woodingdean, where a Brighton councillor sought to bring order to the sprawl -

'On the representation of Councillor Weymouth steps are being taken to control the old vans and railway carriages used for habitation at Woodingdean.'<sup>208</sup>

Similar scenes could be observed at Sweet Hill west of Patcham, above the Wild Park at Moulsecoomb and in a different form at Shoreham Beach under its earlier appellation - 'Bungalow Town'. Elsewhere in the locality, outside the Brighton conurbation, plotlands were sprawling over the scrub covered clay hillside of Newhaven Heights and on the chalk slopes behind Seaford where the Sussex

<sup>205</sup> Ivor-Jennings W (1932) *The law relating to town and country planning* p6

<sup>206</sup> ESRO SERDC DB/D57/8c3 submitted plans

<sup>207</sup> Mais SPB (in Williams-Ellis C (1938) *Britain and the beast*) The plain man looks at England p216

<sup>208</sup> BHH 28.1.1933 p11

Downsmen Minute Books recorded - ‘...lengthy correspondence...concerning the shacks in Cradle Valley.’<sup>209</sup> On the northern fringe of Burgess Hill, the Valebridge Estate was advertised as -

‘Suitable for the early building of a country cottage or bungalow or otherwise for a few acres suitable for a poultry farm...’<sup>210</sup>

Throughout southern Britain there was a widespread growth of these ‘landscapes of informal settlement’ which have featured heavily in the work of Hardy and Ward where they have covered this aspect of British housing in some detail.

It is the expansion of the urban areas after World War One that saw the greatest opposition to the housing sprawl, a campaign that rumbled on to 1939, indeed the wartime reports of the Scott and Uthwatt committees, later summarised in a Penguin Special, was largely as a result of the efforts of the pre-World War Two campaigners. This publication made the case for government intervention in the planning process in order to better direct housing and industrial schemes. Noting - ‘The Impact of Town on Country’ - and the effect of urban growth into its hinterland, the report observed -

‘An appreciation of the pleasures of natural scenery and a yearning for them, together with the desire to live nearer to country conditions, developed in many town dwellers, who wished to escape from conditions which they had come to believe were natural to an urban way of life.’

There was of course a reaction to this yearning for a rural idyll -

‘The motor car made escape from the old urban conditions increasingly possible and the story of this century (20<sup>th</sup>) has therefore been one of steadily increasing encroachment of the town on the country - a steadily increasing ‘suburbanisation’ of the country areas adjoining the towns.’<sup>211</sup>

This was a feature of suburban life that had been noted earlier by Ivor Jennings -

‘Suburban railway services and especially the invention of the internal combustion engine have made this possible for many...’<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> ESRO ACC 6849 Sussex Downsmen archive

<sup>210</sup> Warne H (ed) (1994) *Wivelsfield: the history of a Wealden parish* p249-250

<sup>211</sup> Young GM (ed) (1943) *Country and town: a summary of the Scott and Uthwatt reports* p39

<sup>212</sup> Ivor-Jennings p6

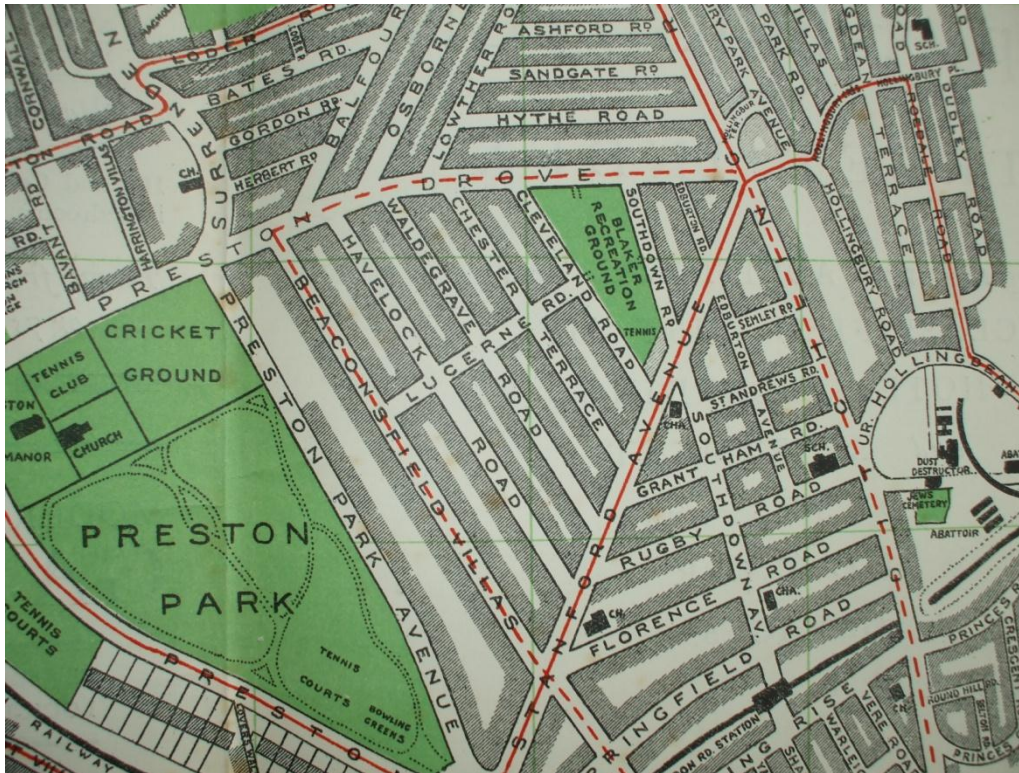


Fig 23  
Preston Park and the Stanford estate<sup>213</sup>  
Source: Brighton tourist guide 1935

Preston Park and streets built on the Stanford estate in Preston parish show evidence of town planning principles in their development, not the constrictions of Brighton's old strip field pattern and piecemeal development. Prior 'urban-fringe' land-uses can be discerned in the east with the concentration of cemetery, abattoirs, railway sidings and dust destructor located on an un-named road, formerly Dog Kennel Lane, the home to a 19th century hunt kennels. The 'West End' of the area has Preston Manor, tennis courts and bowling greens.

The general public's feeling of control being needed in development and planning issues was heightened by the success of central planning during World War Two, and the Scott and Uthwatt report eventually led to the setting up of the New Towns Act 1946, the Town and Country Planning Act in 1947 and the National Parks Act 1949, key legislation in controlling development and the outcome of the interwar campaigning to protect open countryside and historic communities.

<sup>213</sup> Brighton street map c1935



## 4.3

## Landscape threats

*'In these days of a slowly growing population there is a need of new houses especially of the cottage kind but there is no need of the ugly erections often put up. Some of these are just bits of town streets or bits of suburbia scattered about a fair country. They will forever be aliens and strangers.'*

A Countryman's Diary (Rev AA Evans) 1928<sup>214</sup>

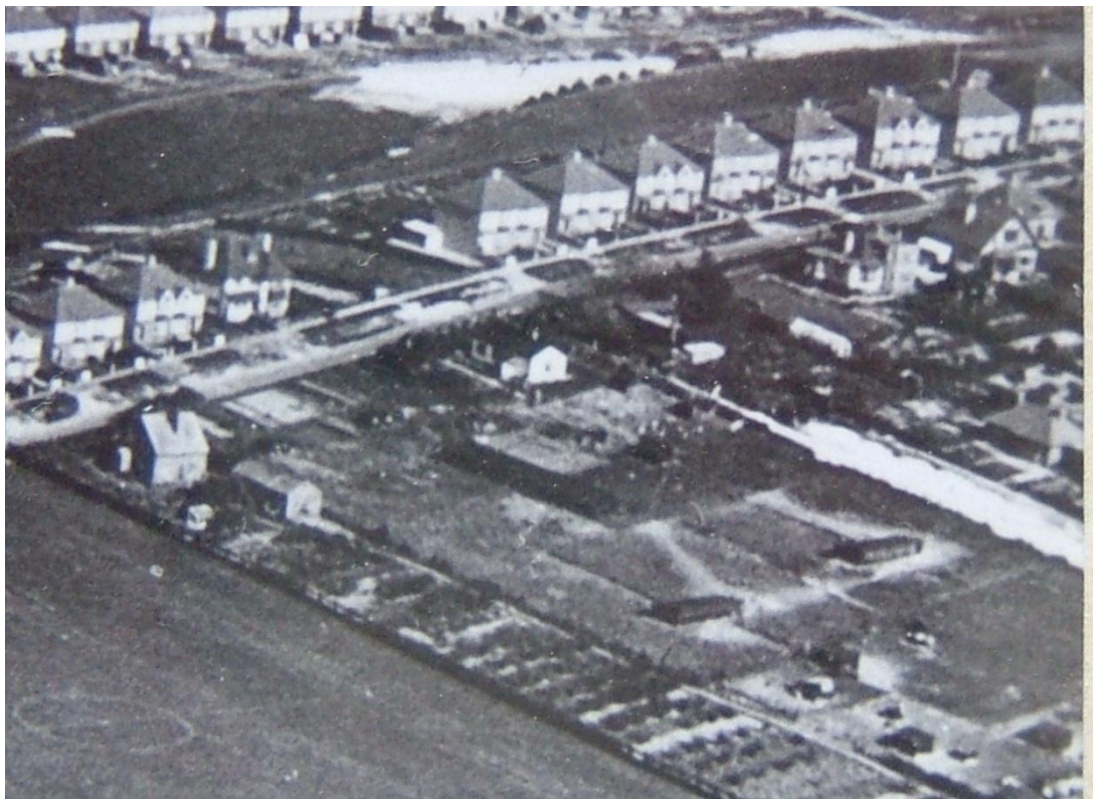


Fig 24

Ladies Mile Road, Patcham.

Source: John Carter collection

Aerial view looking towards the northeast c1934. The contrast between the housing developments of the 1920s to the south of Ladies Mile Road and that of the 1930s to the north is clearly shown. The more intensive development of the Ladies Mile Estate is seen in contrast to the extensive land use and piecemeal development of the earlier housing.<sup>215</sup>

<sup>214</sup> SCM v2n12 p566

<sup>215</sup> photo Mr J. Carter

Williams in *The Country and the City* explored the dichotomy and changing dynamic of human settlement, especially the belief in a 'Golden Age' -

'Country and City are very powerful words...not surprising when we remember how much they seem to stand for in the experience of human communities.'<sup>216</sup>

The suburb, falling as it does between these extremes sits in a philosophical 'limbo', unsure of its physical or social situation, hankering for one, shunning another, with no definite stance to either extreme. The lure of the green field and 'fair prospect' has to be set against the tug of the urban services.

'Countryside conservation became a matter of extreme urgency in the 1920s and '30s when a rash of indiscriminate development...began to destroy some of the least unspoiled landscape in the country'<sup>217</sup>

Throughout the interwar period the literature of the two opposing camps, the conservationists and developers, mushroomed through campaigning volumes, journals and tracts on the one hand, estate brochures and press 'puffs' on the other. The letters pages of national newspapers echoed the 'higher' world of national figures and wealthy builders, and regional papers the more pressing needs of individual developments and the opposing campaigns. Sheail observed in *Rural conservation in interwar Britain* the stages of the campaign as 'Urban Attack' 'Rural Disintegration' 'Preservation' and 'Statutory Planning'<sup>218</sup> It was the speed of urban growth early in the post war period that caught the 'concerned' public unawares; the immediate years of 1919-22 were the years of intense building activity both from the private sector and through central government funding -

'...the 'Housing, Town Planning etc. Act' of 1919 (where) a system of housing subsidies was introduced in order to help alleviate the desperate shortage of working class housing caused partly by the war'<sup>219</sup>

The sprawl of building was a theme of many campaigns, which sought to stem the flow, all part of a wider concern that unregulated growth was severely detrimental to the environment. This period saw the birth and growth of range of amenity societies - locally, such as the Sussex Downsmen in 1923, the *Sussex County Magazine(SCM)* 1926 and nationally, that same year, the Council for the Preservation of Rural

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<sup>216</sup> Williams R (1973) *The country and the city* p1

<sup>217</sup> Brandon (in Leslie and Short) *Countryside conservation* p140

<sup>218</sup> Sheail J (1981) *Rural conservation in interwar Britain* p xi

<sup>219</sup> Sheail p68



England (CPRE). The planner Patrick Abercrombie was a leading light in this latter movement seeing as a central theme -

‘... the cause of the English countryside. Like a ‘leitmotif’ the cause of the preservation of the English countryside was destined to run through the whole of twentieth century planning’<sup>220</sup>

There was already a body of influential opinion formed around this theme, The Commons, Footpaths and Open Spaces Society had been founded in 1860 and The National Trust from 1895; throughout the period publications proliferated with titles that told much of their content - *England, ugliness and noise*; *England and the Octopus* culminating in the highly influential *Britain and the Beast*, both the latter by the wealthy aesthete and architect, Clough Williams-Ellis. In 1927 in its second issue, *SCM* carried an article - ‘Ruining rural Sussex: monstrosities of the countryside’ drawing attention to the shoddiness of much modern rural housing -

‘...for unless every effort and protest is made against this indiscriminate development, ‘sharp practice’ and jerry-building, it will spread like a rotten cancer throughout the length and breadth of the land’<sup>221</sup>

The novelist, travel writer and broadcaster S.P.B. Mais was a stern opponent of this threat to rural landscape -

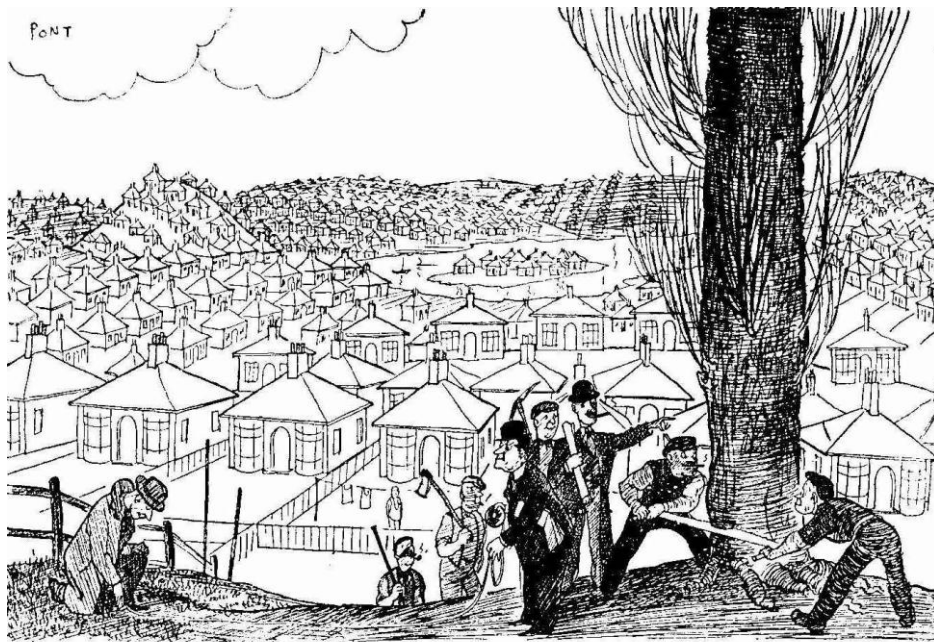
‘...the plain man will perhaps best gauge what is happening to England if he travels the high roads of Sussex. Let him take the coast road from Newhaven to Bognor Regis...a few years ago his view over the cliff or hedge would have been uninterrupted for nearly the whole journey, now it is blocked by a long succession of ugly and vulgar houses.’<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Abercrombie P (1943) *Town and country planning* p55

<sup>221</sup> *SCM* v1n2 p80-1 W.Edward Palmer

<sup>222</sup> Mais (in Williams-Ellis 1938) p 216



THE BRITISH CHARACTER.  
DETERMINATION NOT TO PRESERVE THE RURAL AMENITIES.

Fig 25

The British character

Source: 'Pont' (Graham Laidlaw) *The British Character* 1938

A Punch cartoon that exemplifies the public attitude to landscape spoliation. Only one resident is witnessing the demise of the final tree in the 'bungaloid' landscape. 'The British Character' surely, with 'bowler hats' and 'trilby hats' supervising and 'flat caps' working.

Clough Williams-Ellis, in one of his earliest works, *England and the Octopus*, a decade before the Pont cartoon, showed he was no friend of the single storied dwellings illustrated in fig 25 -

'...the intrusive impertinence of the bungalow knows no bounds. Before the War one had learnt to expect rows of villas to spring up along the line of the public services...as do rank weeds along an open drain; but the bungalows are not thus regimented - they penetrate into the wildest country as lone adventurers or in guerrilla bands.'<sup>223</sup>

The sprawl of building was a theme of many campaigns, which sought to stem the flow, all part of a wider concern that unregulated growth was severely detrimental to the environment. This period saw the birth and growth of range of amenity societies - locally, such as the Sussex Downsmen in 1923, the *Sussex County Magazine* 1926

<sup>223</sup> Williams-Ellis C (1938) *Britain and the beast* p141

and nationally, that same year, the Council for the Preservation of Rural England. The planner Patrick Abercrombie was a leading light in this latter movement seeing as a central theme -

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<sup>224</sup> Abercrombie P (1943) *Town and country planning* p55

<sup>225</sup> *SCM* v1n2 p80-1 W.Edward Palmer

<sup>226</sup> Mais (in Williams-Ellis 1938) p 216

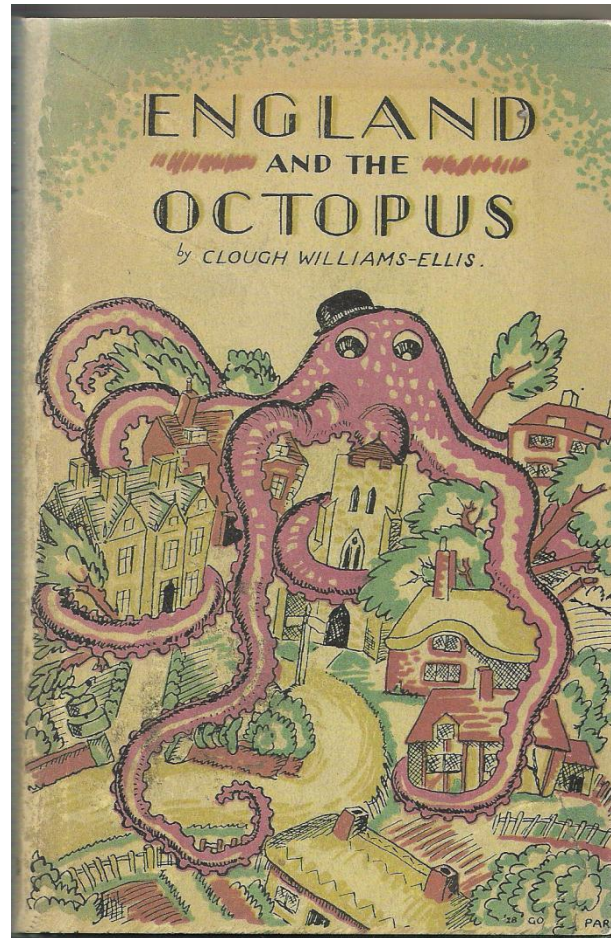


Fig 26

England and the Octopus

Source: England &amp; the Octopus: dust-jacket (1928)

*...the spate of mean building...that is shrivelling up the old England'* <sup>227</sup>

Clough Williams-Ellis' attack on the assault on 'traditional' England is clearly seen in the book dust-jacket; the 'octopus' speculator - readily recognized by the bowler hat - has his tentacles around manor-house and church, cottage and farmhouse, copse and garden. In 'England and the Octopus' he fulminated -

'Since the War (England) has been changing with an acceleration that is catastrophic, thoroughly frightening the thoughtful amongst us, and making them sadly wonder whether anything recognisable of our lovely England will be left for our children's children...for-need it be said? It is chiefly the spate of mean building all over the country that is shrivelling up the old England-mean and perky little houses that surely none but mean and perky little souls should inhabit with satisfaction.'<sup>228</sup>

<sup>227</sup> Williams-Ellis (1928) *England and the octopus* p15-16

<sup>228</sup> Williams-Ellis (1928) p15-6

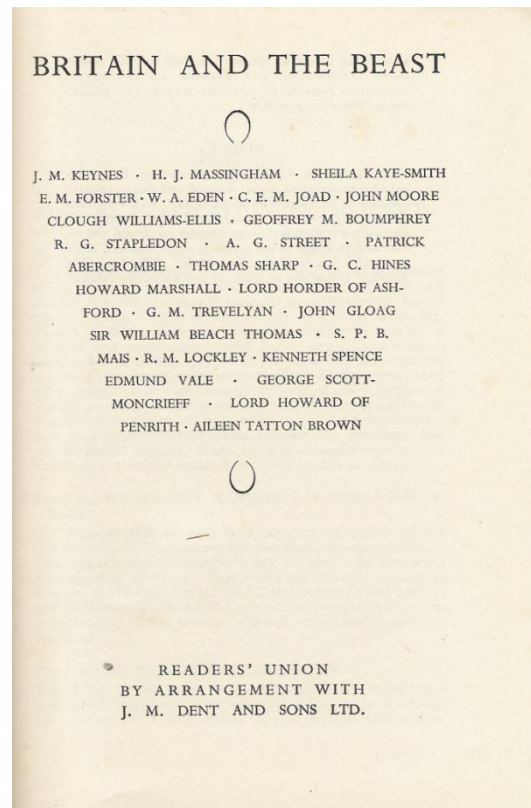


Fig 27

Britain & the Beast: title page

Source: Williams-Ellis 'Britain & the Beast' 1938

The author list for Clough Williams-Ellis' successor to '*Octopus*' is an impressive list of the environmentally concerned of the period, from novelist to economist, farmer to town planner, aristocrat to socialist. The post-war movement of population away from the urban centres had lasting impacts on the urban fringe, but also, by dribbling out into rural areas, it despoiled a far larger area, both physically and visually -

'So intent are they enjoying the amenities which Nature provides that thousands of them have planted their houses in such a way as to destroy those amenities for others. They have been concerned only with the view from their windows and the excellence of the motor roads which carry them into the towns. They have failed in many cases to secure themselves proper water supply and drainage systems.'<sup>229</sup>

Similarly in *England, Ugliness and Noise* Darby and Hamilton make the point -

'Houses, of course must be built. Good housing is fundamental to a decent life. This is not necessarily a question of fewer houses but a question of

<sup>229</sup> Ivor-Jennings p6

‘where’ they should be built; but it is worth mentioning that many of the worst bungaloid growths make no contribution whatever to the Housing Problem.’<sup>230</sup>

In the interwar period this national view over the threats to the countryside was mirrored at a local level by concern over particular localities. The proximity of Sussex to the immense population of the metropolis and its relative accessibility by road and rail meant that the environmental threats from inappropriate and overbearing developments were even more keenly felt. The main challenge to the early campaigners was to attempt to stem the tide of speculative development, from single bungalows and plotland railway carriages to whole estates and ‘Garden Suburbs’, and none was more of a threat than the plan to build a ‘garden city’ across the downland at Crowlink, east of the Cuckmere valley on the Seven Sisters cliffs, a picture book Sussex coastal landscape and one etched into English consciousness. This was all the more urgent as the most notorious of the early post-war projects, the rapidly expanding plotland of Peacehaven was close by on the hills west of the port of Newhaven. This development had its origins in the days before organised local conservation groups were able to influence such schemes and was a prime consideration in the opposition to all later plans along the same lines. Conceived by Charles Neville as ‘The Garden City of the South Downs by the Sea’<sup>231</sup> but seen by its opponents as ‘a monstrous blot on the national conscience.’<sup>232</sup>

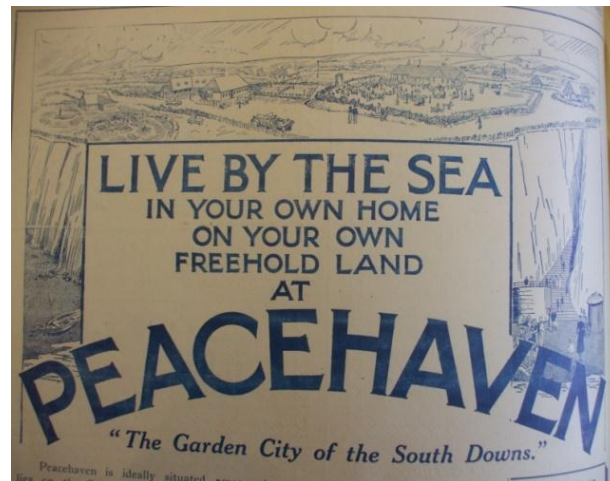


Fig 28  
Peacehaven advertisement  
Source: Brighton & Hove Diary 1922

<sup>230</sup> Darby A and Hamilton CC (1930) *England: ugliness and noise* p15

<sup>231</sup> *The Brighton Season* 16.6.1922 p6

<sup>232</sup> Marshall (in Williams Ellis ed) *The rakes progress* p166

The Seven Sisters scheme was a prominent component in the setting up of *SCM*, which with its co-partner in local conservation issues, the Society of Sussex Downsmen founded in 1923, was to combat just such ventures as the scheme for Crowlink Valley. The aim of the Society was -

‘To create and stimulate interest in the Sussex Downs. To assist in preserving all beauty spots, places of public access, ancient monuments and antiquities, rights of way, footpaths and bridle paths and to prevent spoliation of the Sussex Downs’<sup>233</sup>

There were many other interested parties, among them *Country Life* magazine, who were strong campaigners against over-development, and their readership was in full support, as seen here in 1926 -

‘The threat to Sussex.

Sir-everybody who lives in South Sussex and many thousands more who visit it and have learnt to love it will be gratified to you for the suggestion that remaining open spaces of the South Downs should be scheduled en masse by the First Commissioner of Works and that an Open Space Fund should be formed on the lines of the Road Fund to purchase such areas as national parks. Those who do not realise what is happening should be sent down, if only for a day, to travel along the coast from Rottingdean to Beachy Head. The stretch from Rottingdean to Newhaven is already entirely ruined by sporadic and unregulated building. Now the cliffs between Seaford and Beachy Head are threatened. Of the combes [sic] that run north into the Downs, Crowlink is, perhaps, the most beautiful, but apart from this, once the infection takes, it will spread, without doubt, to the edge of the Down space now protected by Eastbourne, and the incomparable white cliffs which the visitor sees from the foot of Beachy Head will soon be crawling with Brixton bungalows, tin shacks and chicken coops. It is a problem which obviously, must be tackled on a national scale, otherwise the speculative builder, even when he can be diverted from his fell designs, will continue to flourish on the forced benefactions of the nature-loving public.

Ralph Jefferson’<sup>234</sup>

This cliff top housing scheme was noted by an *SCM* editorial -

‘The Crowlink valley is the key to the Seven Sisters Cliffs. Some months ago a committee was formed with the object of raising funds to purchase this Downland beauty spot, which was threatened by a building scheme.... (the National Trust) ...will hold the property for the benefit of the nation...the most important concern of the Society is with the preservation of the Sussex Downs and their amenities. The Downs are threatened from many quarters and the question of their salvation presents a very complicated problem.’<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> *SCM* 1928 v2n3 p126

<sup>234</sup> *Country Life* 4.9.1926 p365

<sup>235</sup> *SCM* 1927 v1n4 p145



An early battle after the preservation of the Seven Sisters was the securing of an equally iconic landscape to the northwest of Brighton, the Devils Dyke, and its surrounding downland. There were already serious concerns over proposals to construct a motor racing track on the downland dip-slope at Portslade, which with its access roads and a proposed aerodrome, would have destroyed hundreds of acres of countryside, and in the open downland be visible and audible for many miles.<sup>236</sup> The Devils Dyke, at 712ft, has been a viewpoint of consequence for a long time, and the view from the summit commands a vast area of southeast England, taking in a large part of Sussex, the North Downs of Kent, the Surrey Hills and the Isle of Wight. From the rise of the Georgian resort it has featured in Brighton guides as an excursion destination, and early 19th century prints show a scene surprisingly similar to the present; sauntering visitors, handsome carriages, a popular tavern.<sup>237</sup> Visitor numbers were sufficiently high for a railway line to be constructed in the 19th century to a point south of the summit; it ran until motor excursionists caused its demise in 1938.

There were a number of schemes to capitalise on the popularity of the Devils Dyke; the ex-mayor of Brighton, E.M. Marx had purchased the 240 acre Dyke estate in 1904 but sold it soon after to Mrs Barrasford, a Brighton music hall proprietor who had a scheme for a bungalow town with corrugated iron shops, connected by motor bus to the resort. A further project in 1920 appeared in a press report as 'Dyketown' and was a scheme for a very large housing development. This scheme also failed to materialise and interest in developing the far-flung hilltop dwindled. After the First World War there were further ideas to build on the site; the Society of Sussex Downsmen, amongst others were anxious to circumvent this potential loss of a major site -

‘.....Brighton Corporation purchasing the Devils Dyke for preservation to the public... [in the] summer of 1925...the Council for the Preservation of Sussex...helped to defeat a bungalow building threat by getting the earthwork scheduled under the Ancient Monuments Protection Act... After prolonged discussion the matter was happily settled by Alderman Carden making himself responsible for the purchase of the estate... [he] has stated that there shall be no wiring on the estate and we understand the shacks and sideshows which have hitherto disfigured the summit are to be cleared away.’<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> *SCM* 1928 v2n9 p424

<sup>237</sup> Ryman E (1984) *Guide to the Devils Dyke* p16; Montford (ed) (2005) *The landscape book of Brighton prints* p45

<sup>238</sup> *BHH* 3.2.1906 p5; *Architects Journal* 6.10.1920 pp366,368; *Brighton and Hove Society* 30.9.1920 p7; *SCM* v2 n6 p272



Curiously, with the amount of development taking place in Patcham, in the heart of the South Downs, the Minute Books of the Sussex Downsmen from 1926-1938 make no mention of the parish and its multifarious housing schemes.<sup>239</sup>



Fig 29  
Devils Dyke c 1905  
Source: authors own collection

*'The estate has been purchased by Mrs Barrasford of Hippodrome fame with a view to the formation of a colony of bungalows'*<sup>240</sup>

The wild nature of the view, the steep scarp slope and the deep chasm of the Dyke dry valley were at some variance with the 19th century use of the site for - amongst other things - a rowdy tavern, a fun fair, a menagerie, a camera obscura, a cable car and a funicular railway down the northern slope.<sup>241</sup>

There was some success to report on the conservation front, by mid-1928 it was possible for the Chairman of the Downs Preservation Committee to be able to report -

*'...Devils Dyke saved...cliffs from Seaford to Eastbourne saved....Chyngton farm estate [Seaford] acquired by unknown benefactor with a view to preserving the essential parts...and good grounds for believing the Exceat area [in the Cuckmere Valley] would be sterilised from building.'*<sup>242</sup>

The proliferation of amenity societies and conservation bodies was not always seen with such equanimity -

<sup>239</sup> ESRO ACC 6849

<sup>240</sup> BHH 3.2.1906 p5

<sup>241</sup> Clark P (1976) *The railways of Devils Dyke* p46.p42

<sup>242</sup> SCM 1928 v2n6 p272(4)

‘There is great talk just now and much writing about town planning and preserving the ‘amenities’- that blessed word - of the countryside; but while newspapers make protest and societies - with very long names - are being started, the mischief is being done.’<sup>243</sup>

The local historian Frederick Harrison, in writing for the Photographic Record Society, noted the finer detail of twentieth century change -

‘That the countryside is changing rapidly is patent to all. In the place of hedges with trees and flowers, and the village inns, with their signs, we have new cuts, by-roads, without even grass, and petrol pumps for inn signs.’<sup>244</sup>

The need for a joint effort by local authorities in Downs preservation was all too apparent, the rapid spread of housing over the downland, the construction of access roads and ancillary buildings such as filling stations, cafes and road-house hotels came from a multiplicity of developers. Prof. Colin Buchanan observed -

‘...the roadside consequences of motor traffic-advertisements, cafes, hotels and petrol filling stations...is with few exceptions, an unhappy story of ugliness and destruction of rural and urban appearances.’<sup>245</sup>

A particular aspect of this developmental sprawl was the proliferation of advertising boards along and adjacent to main roads (fig 31). This feature was apparent at Patcham in a dispute in 1926 between the County Council and the Sweet Hill developers; the *Brighton and Hove Herald* reported the case on some detail. An action was brought under the Advertisements Regulation Act 1907 against Thomas Gasson, the site owner of Sweet Hill, and a range of national and local firms who were advertising on the hoardings. The effect on the landscape was linked into a range of other environmental concerns as observed by John Flowers for the Council -

‘In the present case there was no doubt, he said, that the advertisement in question was exhibited that it was visible from the public highway, and that it disfigured the natural beauty of the landscape...Land had apparently been purchased there by Mr Gasson who had set out to develop it to some extent by selling plots to various persons for poultry keeping and so-on. Houses too - if he might dignify them by such a name-had been erected on parts of the hill.’<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> SCM 1928 v2n12 p566

<sup>244</sup> SCM 1928 v2n12 p566

<sup>245</sup> Buchanan C (1955) *Mixed blessings: the motor in Britain* p98

<sup>246</sup> BHH 31.1.1925

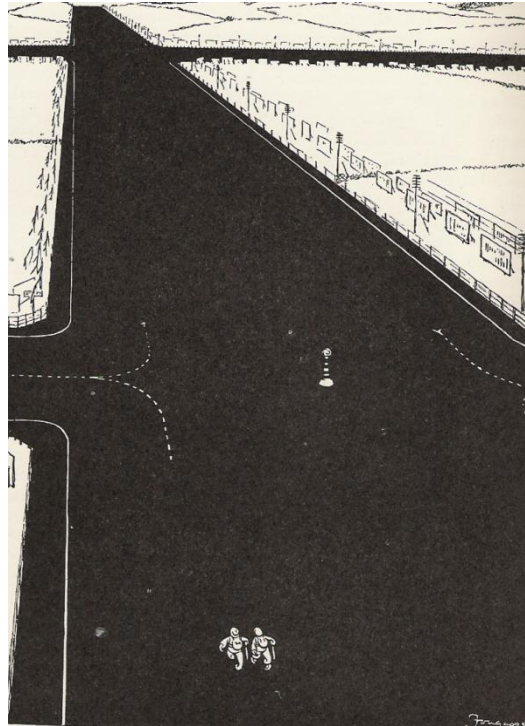


Fig 30  
 'The walking tour' 1928 (Pont)  
 Source: Buchanan<sup>247</sup>

The effect of roadside hoardings - and a new highway - on the rural scene.

A neighbouring landowner, the Earl of Chichester, was brought as a distinguished witness for the council and stated that the advertisements were -

‘very conspicuous... [in]...a landscape of natural beauty.’

All were found guilty; Gasson was fined £5, the others 10/- with £2.2s costs for ‘Disfiguring the Downs’. An editorial article commented -

‘From every lover of Sussex, yes, and from every lover of England, has gone forth a deep sigh of relief...by deciding that the advertisements on Sweet Hill Patcham are illegal, as interfering with the natural beauty of the landscape, the Hove County magistrates have shown how England can be saved from the hand of the despoiler.’<sup>248</sup>

<sup>247</sup> Buchanan p62

<sup>248</sup> BHH 28.2.1925

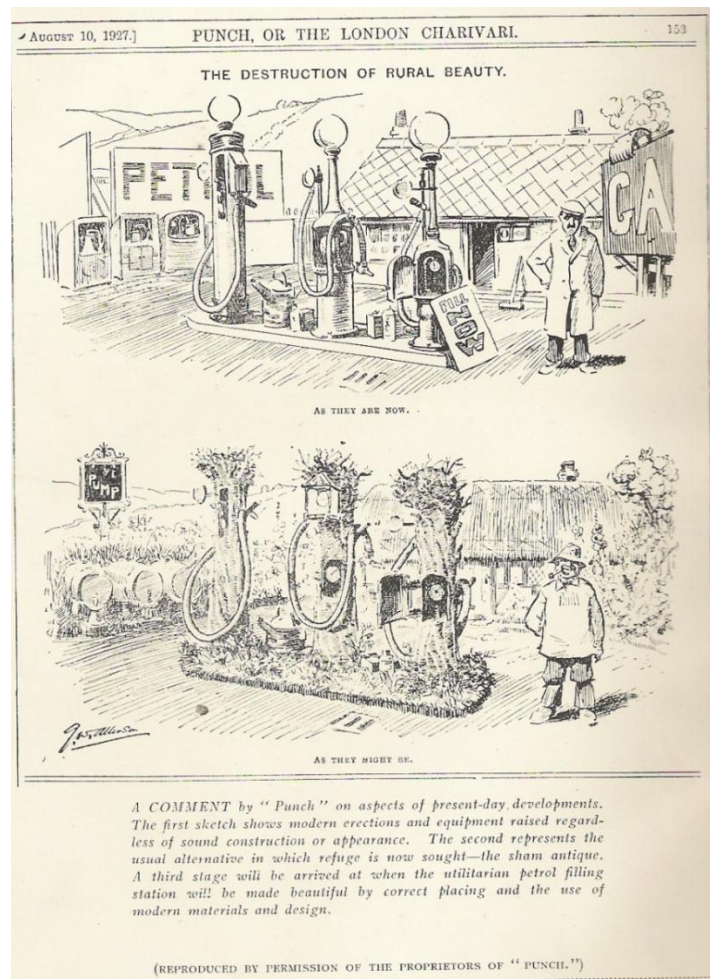


Fig 31  
The Destruction of Rural Beauty  
Source: West Sussex Coast and Downs 1929

A Punch cartoon of 1927 which appeared as the preface to a West Sussex Council planning report.

New housing schemes crossed local authority boundaries causing all manner of difficulties in enforcing the legislative process; Brighton's built area ran across neighbouring authority boundaries bringing suburban housing into previously wholly rural authorities. As a result of 19th century local government re-organisation, often linked to the former Poor Law union boundaries,<sup>249</sup> the surrounding rural parishes' administration was located far from the resort's expanding fringe. By the early 1920s Brighton suburbs were in the catchment of Steyning East RDC and Newhaven RDC, as well as in the neighbouring municipal borough of Hove and the urban districts of Portslade, Southwick and Shoreham.

<sup>249</sup> Godfrey (in Leslie and Short ) Local government in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries p126

A proposal to circumvent these problems arose as the *Brighton District Regional Town Planning Scheme*, this was championed by a phalanx of substantial local dignitaries and landowners, and a joint letter was issued from the Countess of Chichester, Earl Buxton, Capt. Brand, John Christie, Viscount Gage, Col Powell Edwards and Sir Henry Shiffner -

‘Sir-as owners of Downland within the area to be embraced by this scheme we wish to express our great satisfaction that it is the intention of local authorities to proceed with measures to preserve the character and natural beauty of the South Downs. Since the war circumstances have combined to encourage building on and near the Downs. The demand for houses throughout the country, the popularity of this district in particular, the impoverishment of the owners and heavy death duties are all factors contributing to the ‘development’ that has been taking place on haphazard lines and in varying degrees of intensity during the last ten years.

We feel that if this process continues unhindered it will only be a matter of time until the amenities of the Downs are ruined and much potential value lost to the district as a whole thereby. Houses to meet the increase of population must of course be built but we feel that in the circumstances the demand could be more appropriately and efficiently satisfied by proper housing schemes than by the gradual semi-suburbanisation of some of the most beautiful country in England...we hope it is possible to prevent the erection of straggling rows of cottages along and closely frontaging the roads ....’<sup>250</sup>

It was not only the landed grandees of the county who - often with lands adjacent to the relentless sprawl - were showing concern for the despoliation. In the rural fastness of the Cuckmere valley the long-serving vicar of Berwick, the Rev. AA Evans was able to write in his monthly *SCM* column - ‘A Countryman’s Diary’-

‘In these days of a slowly growing population there is a need of new houses especially of the cottage kind but there is no need of the ugly erections often put up. Some of these are just bits of town streets or bits of suburbia scattered about fair country. They will forever be aliens and strangers...Rural District Councils say they have no power except to make road lines and discuss drainage pipes, sewers and soak ways with architects; and there is the eternal feud between them and the county councils. As for Parliament, it is much too absorbed in high politics to consider hedgerows, winding lanes and distant vistas; so at great pace fair scenes are being sullied.’<sup>251</sup>

The appearance of the new building evinced comment from all quarters, often in unflattering terms, as were the remarks of the president of RIBA who -

‘... condemned much of the architecture, painting and sculpture of today. Many of the buildings now being erected ...were exotic to this country, they were stark and bald and without any interest. A great deal of this architecture

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<sup>250</sup> *SCM* 1929 v3n7 p504

<sup>251</sup> *SCM* 1928 v2n12 p566

was borrowed from the Continent but it must be borne in mind that much of it on the Continent was due to the poverty of the nations concerned...'<sup>252</sup>

The Rev AA Evans, ever one to comment on suburbia from his rural parish stated -

'I have never understood why the builder of today and his employers are so much in love with white roughcast. It is assertive crude and will never mellow, as do the older buildings, with what is around. It is not too much to say that some of the fairest spots in Sussex are being spoilt by rows of cottages of a material foreign to the soil and district.'<sup>253</sup>

Whitehand and Carr observed this tension but saw a different side -

'Contrary to accepted wisdom - and paradoxically, in view of the scorn heaped upon suburbs by the architectural literati - architects are shown to have been heavily involved in the preparation of building applications for the construction of suburban houses...'<sup>254</sup>

The national concerns over the rapid interwar change were expressed in a variety of forms. H.V. Morton set out on a car journey; 'In search of England' as his subsequent volume was titled, was a best seller running to many editions, it outlined the character of England already noted as being under threat. Morton looked for 'The place where London ends' to start his journey, he found it at an un-named spot in west London that could have been any urban fringe in south east England -

'Now London ends at a public house. In a line with the public house were new shops. In a field some way off the high road were scared looking, pink and white villas, each one possessed a bald garden and a brand new galvanised dustbin at the back door....the most significant item on the landscape was an empty omnibus standing in a weary attitude opposite the public house.'<sup>255</sup>

The environmental concerns that grew dramatically throughout the early 20th century were partly in response to local issues, themselves indicative of a wider national and indeed international process of urban growth and physical expansion. The local situation of Greater Brighton and its South Downs hinterland were situations mirrored in a variety of forms across Britain, the uncontrolled expansion of the 19th century and the early post war period was gradually brought into order, and Town Planning legislation in 1932, 1935 and 1943<sup>256</sup> ensured a more orderly growth pattern which presaged the post-Second World War world of New Towns and the 1947 Act.

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<sup>252</sup> BG 17.1.1931 p15

<sup>253</sup> SCM 1931 p52

<sup>254</sup> Whitehand JWH and Carr C (2001) *The creators of England's interwar suburbs* p218

<sup>255</sup> Morton HV (1927) *In search of England* p5

<sup>256</sup> Telling AE (1963) *Planning law and procedure* p7-8

The short period of time from the concerns of the interwar preservationists and conservationists until the implementation of the 1947 Act, has been covered comprehensively by Matless in *Landscape and Englishness*, where the complex web of social concerns and movements are outlined. The process of social change that brings about the planning controls of the post Second World War era and a very different world of housing provision. These changes are seen in a tangible form with the processes that occur in the suburban landscape, changes that reveal not only the continuity from an earlier period, but show clearly the diversity of the suburb; all the while seeing it within the context of wider processes of change, which adds a degree of perspective to the suburban landscape.

After 1947 it would be difficult to repeat the observations of the Rev A.A.Evans -

‘All one sees are cottages of the town type, and villas of Suburbia cast loosely over a fair countryside’<sup>257</sup>

It is this early 20th century suburban growth that the next chapter turns to, a growth that would occur in two definable stages.

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<sup>257</sup> SCM 1931 p51



## Chapter 5

## Early interwar developments in Patcham

*'Disfiguring the Downs...'*<sup>258</sup>

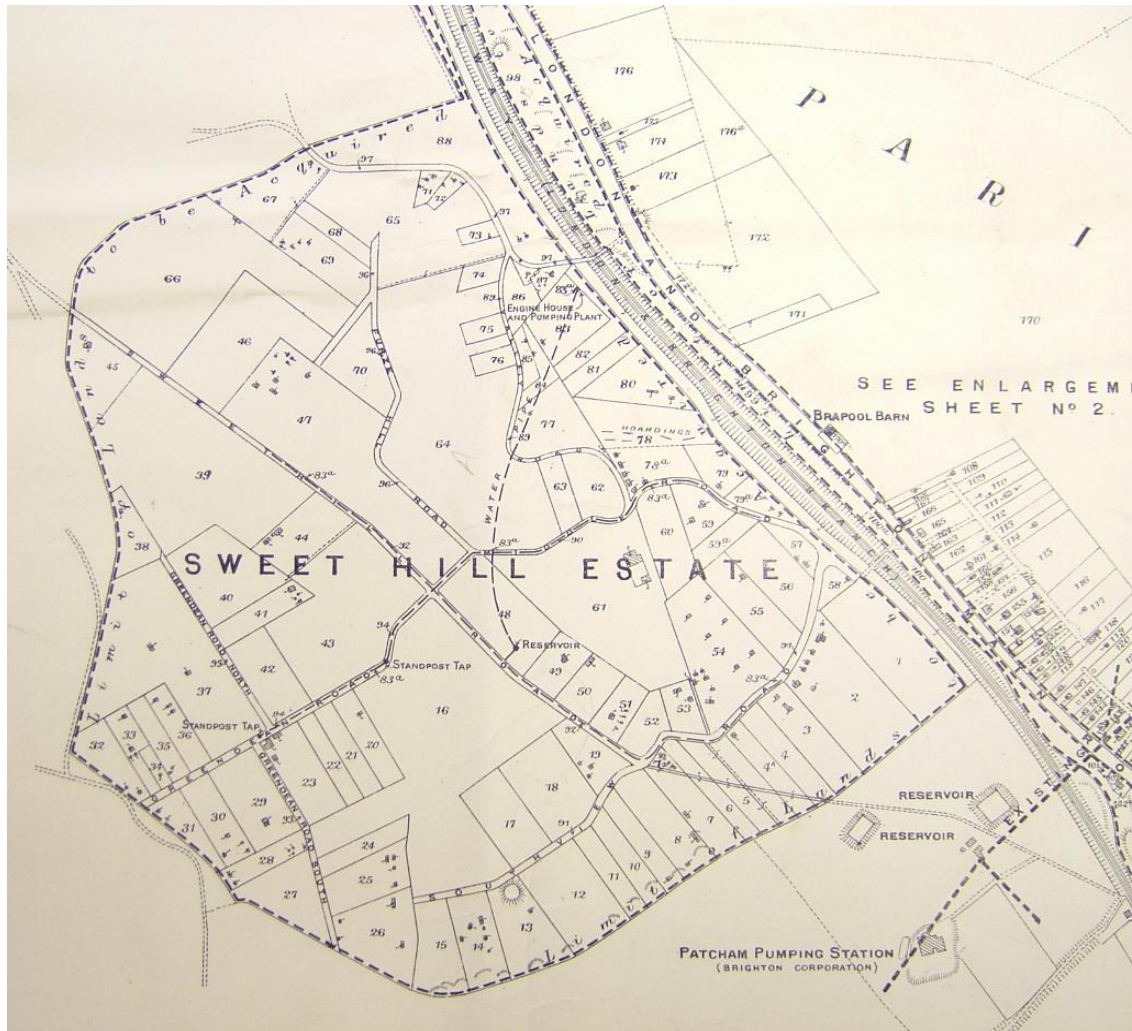


Fig 32  
Sweet Hill Estate Nov 1923  
Source: ESRO

*'There's a trim rabble let in, are all these your faithful friends o' th' suburbs'*  
Shakespeare<sup>259</sup>

<sup>258</sup> BHH 28.2.1925

<sup>259</sup> QDP/748/1; Shakespeare *Henry VIII* v.iv.76



The early 20th century overcrowding in central Brighton, linked to the downturn in the local agricultural economy, local government housing policies and changing transport technologies allowed for a rapid expansion of the built area. Public health concerns within Brighton created well regulated housing on its fringe, but outside the Borough in the fiefdom of the smaller rural districts, unregulated dwellings sprawled across the high downland providing much needed dwellings, but at a great cost to the landscape. The housing appeared in two distinct styles of development - the makeshift plotlands and the piecemeal speculative dwellings, both different to each other, but also significantly different from the large scale corporate developments that came after. Both types of development will be considered in this chapter. Although this period of suburban expansion was to become the period of UK housing history with the fastest growth and largest number of dwellings built, there were still discernible in the maelstrom of assorted housing schemes a definite pattern of development. Contemporary commentators suggested that housing somehow just appeared, when in fact even in the most primitive of the 'shack-and-track' colonies there was a sequence of events leading to their genesis. Land was sold in identifiable lots, of often historic shape and name, these shapes dictated later house alignment and road - or track- layout. The new communities had to have names; usually these were existing in the landscape, as example Sweet Hill which appeared on the 1842 Tithe Survey. Continuity as well as change. Different owners of field or plot, different occupiers of cabin, bungalow or semi, each gave an identity to their domain, creating a landscape of diversity, itself part of the landscape lifecycle; it only now looking back over the past near century that this can be seen in perspective.

## 5.1

The suburban process, a personal story writ large.

*'My father bought a plot from the Abergavenny Estate  
...my dad paid tithes to Abergavenny Estate!'*<sup>260</sup>

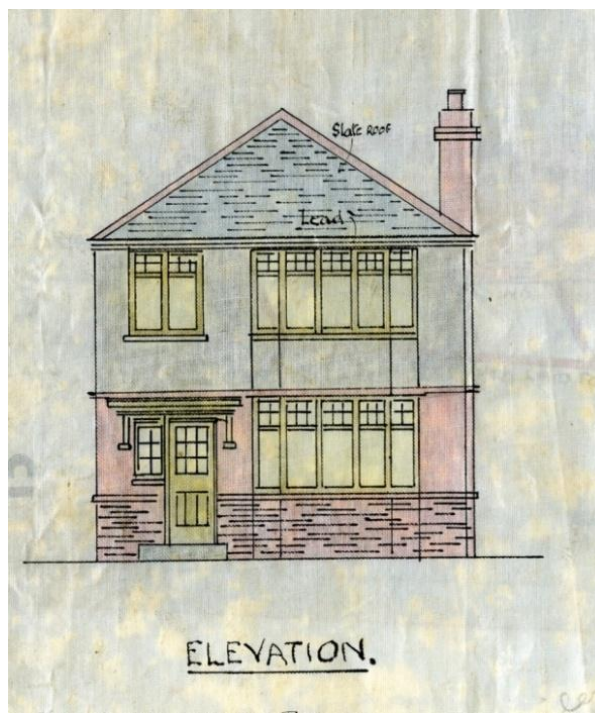


Fig 33  
'Overdale' 102 Ladies Mile Road  
Source: ESRO.

*'Plan of proposed house, 3 bedrooms at Drove Road, Withdean (crossed out)  
Lady's Mile (sic) Patcham.'*<sup>261</sup>

Built for Herbert Watts [Muriel Elms father]

The comment heading this section by Mrs Muriel Elms, a long time Patcham resident, encapsulates the historical span of Patcham's suburbanisation process, linking as it does the Tithe Commutation Act 1836 with the swathe of house-building that occurred in the area in the interwar period; indeed a longer time frame could be employed, as the Marquis of Abergavenny's family had held the manor of Patcham Court since the 15<sup>th</sup>

<sup>260</sup> Elms pers.comm 29.1.2003

<sup>261</sup> ESRO SERDC DB/D57/ 169/B/01

century. Muriel Elms herself carries the story of British interwar suburbia as her life; her father, Herbert Watts, a charge-hand fitter at the large Brighton railway works, had a house built on land previously part of the Abergavenny estate, sold as part of Lot 4 in an auction in July 1921 and purchased by the Patcham property developer Horace Costerton.<sup>262</sup> Mr Watts fitted part of Annette O'Carroll's observation that -

‘Which social groups were moving into owner occupation in Britain before the Second World War is a matter of controversy, with opposing claims that this involved mainly white-collar or skilled manual workers.’<sup>263</sup>

The Watts, who fitted the latter category, moved there in 1928 when Muriel was 15, they had previously lived at 28 Bates Road, Preston<sup>264</sup>; this movement of a family to the suburban fringe at Patcham was but one element of a growth pattern that developed into a private housing sector along the line of the London Road valley from Brighton. The electoral rolls for the early interwar period indicate that there were many with a right to vote in Patcham, by right of landownership, but whose residential addresses were across a large area of central and north Brighton. The 1920 Roll contains one other Bates Road resident as a Ladies Mile Road landholder with several other voters located in the same Fiveways and Surrenden areas of Preston.<sup>265</sup> In private sector Patcham, Muriel Elms duly noted the attractions of the newly erected, detached dwelling, high on its downland ridge, after the Edwardian terraced housing of Bates Road -

‘From our back garden we could see small holdings in Carden Avenue. [The] footpath to school at Varndean [was] through small-holdings, Mr Butcher's.’<sup>266</sup>

The Watts' new home was not looked on with equanimity, Hadrian-Allcroft in *Downland Pathways*, expressed his view from the ridge-top east of Overdale - ‘...the Ladies Mile on the left... takes one down into forsaken Patcham...’<sup>267</sup> Muriel's downland views from the ridge of the Drove Road - later Ladies Mile Road,<sup>268</sup> were not to last long for within four years more new housing was being built across the road - ‘We were used to looking over

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<sup>262</sup> VCH vol VII p216; ESRO ABE 18/0 Abergavenny estate papers

<sup>263</sup> O'Carroll. A p221

<sup>264</sup> *Pikes Directory* 1925 p111

<sup>265</sup> ESRO C/C70/206 Electoral roll 1920

<sup>266</sup> M.Elms pers.comm 29.1.2003

<sup>267</sup> Hadrian-Allcroft A (1924) *Downland Pathways* p96

<sup>268</sup> ESRO SERDC 169B/1

fields, then the estate was built...we were annoyed to have the estate there'<sup>269</sup> Thus in a few sentences, is the pattern of suburban growth in Mrs Elms 'micro-history'. It can be seen as a duality of scale; her parents' aspirational move to a newly built house on the urban fringe was but one small element in the overall British urban expansion that occurred between the wars. The cumulative effect of similar stories of families across the UK brought about suburban growth; similarly the Watts' decision to move, the financial provision required, the transport, social and infrastructural processes that all enabled it to happen, were the product of wider national processes, as indeed was the unease at the rate of growth and standard of suburban housing.

## 5.2

### Patcham growth in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century

#### *'Shack and track development'*.<sup>270</sup>

The social history of the interwar period is closely linked to the housing issue, provision of which varied considerably with changing governments of different political stance. The standard of much urban housing built before the First World War left a lot to be desired, and the numbers being built were in decline -

'Successive years of minimal house building had led to a national housing shortage variously estimated at between 400,000-600,000 dwellings. In the period before 1910 about 85,000 new houses had been built each year, after the introduction of Land Values Duties the building rate fell sharply... during the four years of the war only 50,000 dwellings were added to the national stock.'<sup>271</sup>

In Brighton the situation was aggravated by much of the existing housing stock being particularly poor, as noted in an earlier section of this thesis. The rising numbers of the middle-class were unable to secure adequate housing within the borough and the drift to the urban fringe, outside the municipal border, was well underway before the First World War. The numbers of new houses being built in Brighton are revealed in the annual reports of the Medical Officer of Health whose responsibilities included both the

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<sup>269</sup> M.Elms pers.comm.29.1.2003

<sup>270</sup> Fry p139

<sup>271</sup> Cherry G (1988) *Cities and plans: the shaping of urban Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries* p83

demolition of sub-standard housing and the recording of new structures. The dwellings erected in the years up to the First World War were overwhelmingly for middle-class occupation, but their rateable values were swelling the financial coffers of the local authorities outside the resort boundaries, a point noted in the 1902 Report -

The central part of Brighton is becoming to an increasing extent a business centre for the whole of Sussex. ...the residential parts of Brighton are becoming ... spread out, some of them having spread over the Municipal boundaries, others on to the hill slopes in the North West, North and North East parts of the Borough.<sup>272</sup>

The spread of housing was made possible by the development of new technology -

‘The provision of tram routes to these outskirts is rapidly increasing this peripheral extension...which is most beneficial to the health of the inhabitants.’<sup>273</sup>

The earlier urban growth had been made possible by the expansion of the horse-bus network along the valley floors, and both that mode of transport and the new trams, which enabled the hillier districts to be utilised for housing, were dependant on the financial ability to access them. Public transport was largely a preserve of the middle classes; living outside the central area was certainly preferable, but costly. In 1903, of the 725 new dwelling houses passed by the town council, 305 (42%) were in Preston Park, with 162 (22%) in neighbouring Preston, both on the northern urban fringe; however the central areas of St. Johns and West wards could only muster 10 (1.4%) new dwellings between them.<sup>274</sup> As the report commented -

‘However much building of houses is done in the suburbs, the problem of dealing with insanitary central houses will still remain. Such houses will always be occupied by the very poor.’<sup>275</sup>

The situation then, leading up to the First World War, was of outward urban growth of new middle class dwellings, a process which was changing the employment structure of the surrounding former agricultural districts; as well as the employment involved in building the housing there were the additional factors of suburban domestic service for both men and women. There were opportunities for domestic workers, largely female, but

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<sup>272</sup> *MOH* 1902 p8

<sup>273</sup> *MOH* 1903 p8

<sup>274</sup> *MOH* 1904 p9

<sup>275</sup> *MOH* 1904 p7

also gardening staff and in more favoured households - a chauffeur.<sup>276</sup> The suburbanisation process, was observed by Sigsworth and Warboys noting that -

‘In Anglo-Celtic cities, suburbs acquired an Arcadian image as safe places for family living; removed from urban crime, immorality and disease.’<sup>277</sup>

This new suburban housing was in single dwellings or groups of houses constructed by small local building firms, generally erecting on the existing urban fringe. Styles were in general conservative and carried on the British love of the faux-vernacular that had characterised the provincial Edwardian building pattern.

‘The majority of detached, semis and terraces of the Edwardian period were erected by speculative builders who had little concern for architectural correctness but more for making their buildings appeal to tenants and buyers.’<sup>278</sup>

Building slowed dramatically in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with only 24 new houses erected in 1912 in Brighton, and almost ceased during the war, 22 were built in 1915 and a single house in 1917. The reports for 1916 and 1918 are missing from the Brighton Museum archive. The immediate post-war period of grave housing shortage gave great cause for concern from the general public and the government alike, and with the slogan ‘Homes Fit for Heroes’ a new chapter opened in the national housing situation. Such was the paucity of new housing that the government passed the ‘Temporary Relaxation of Dwellings Act 1919’; this was a desperate measure to alleviate the post-war housing crisis by allowing dwellings to be erected on a six-month restriction order, a measure latched onto by developers large and small. Large blocks of land bought by speculators were broken up into small plots and sold on, to be developed by the occupiers in a range of styles from architect designed detached villas (fig.34) down the scale to re-erected ex-army huts (figs 35 and 36). The 1919 Act meant that many structures erected were built with the thought that they could be legally removed with six month notice, not a situation to generate thoughtful construction. As noted in Hardy and Ward, the Board of Agriculture saw in surplus army huts a cheap way to settle returning soldiers on the land -

‘We estimate that if the material were placed at the disposal of the Board, it would be possible to remove, re-erect and convert a hut into a cottage with three bedrooms, at a total cost, including water supply and drainage, of £125, and that

<sup>276</sup> J.Higgs pers.comm. 10.8.2009

<sup>277</sup> Sigsworth and Warboys p252

<sup>278</sup> Yorke T (2006) *The 1930s house explained* p44

such a cottage if properly maintained would last for thirty years at least. A detached cottage with similar accommodation, but built of brick and stone, would probably cost £250 at the present time.’<sup>279</sup>

These areas of housing were known variously as shanty-towns, plotlands, hutments, ‘shack and track’ or more thoughtfully - ‘landscapes of informal settlement’, and although widespread throughout the UK especially in the south east, are sparsely recorded. Hardy and Ward have written extensively on the topic, as noted in chapter 2, but much of the history of these settlements is revealed mainly through personal memoir and local history accounts, for example Fry on Binley Woods Warwickshire, Walker on Basildon and Lyons on Jaywick Sands both in Essex, Mercer and Holland on the Brighton suburb of Woodingdean. This research on Patcham has revealed one unpublished memoir, many oral testimonies on the Sweet Hill colony and an incomplete local authority archive of immense importance, which will be drawn upon extensively for this section, to give a revealing glimpse of an almost vanished way of life.<sup>280</sup> Vivid memories of occupying these dwellings is contained in two local memoirs; HD Davis recalled the early life of one such residence on Sweet Hill, on the downland north west of Patcham village -

‘Sometime before occupation of the land [1923] my father bought an ex-army hut. The hut was in pieces and sections after demolition. These sections were to be re-assembled elsewhere. In this case they were transported to our plot on Sweet Hill. Men who were skilled in assembly of army huts quickly erected ours on an elevated position....our new abode was given the name *Highlands*’<sup>281</sup>

Five miles south-east of Sweet Hill, on the high open downland at Wick Farm Estate Woodingdean, Douglas Holland as a young boy had similar experiences of the move to the primitive estate, on Christmas Eve 1923 -

‘In the main, the dwellings were shacks. Very few were substantially built...the roof and walls were felted and batten boarded up inside. The scullery was a tin shed with an earth floor...the kitchen had an asbestos and corrugate iron roof as did the bedroom and living room-a complete hotchpotch.’<sup>282</sup>

Ward summed up the various landscapes of informal settlements in *Sociable Cities* -

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<sup>279</sup> Hardy and Ward p3

<sup>280</sup> Hardy and Ward; Fry; Walker D (2001) *Basildon Plotlands*; Mercer P and Holland D (1993) *Hunsmere Pit: The story of Woodingdean and Balsdean*

<sup>281</sup> Davis H (nd 1990?) *The Sweethill settlement* unpub.ms

<sup>282</sup> Mercer and Holland p140

‘(Plotlands)...the word evokes a landscape consisting of a gridiron of grassy tracks, sparsely filled with bungalows constructed from army huts, railway coaches, shanties, sheds, shacks and chalets which when left to evolve on its own, slowly becomes like any other ordinary suburban landscape, leaving only a few clues to its anarchic origins.’<sup>283</sup>

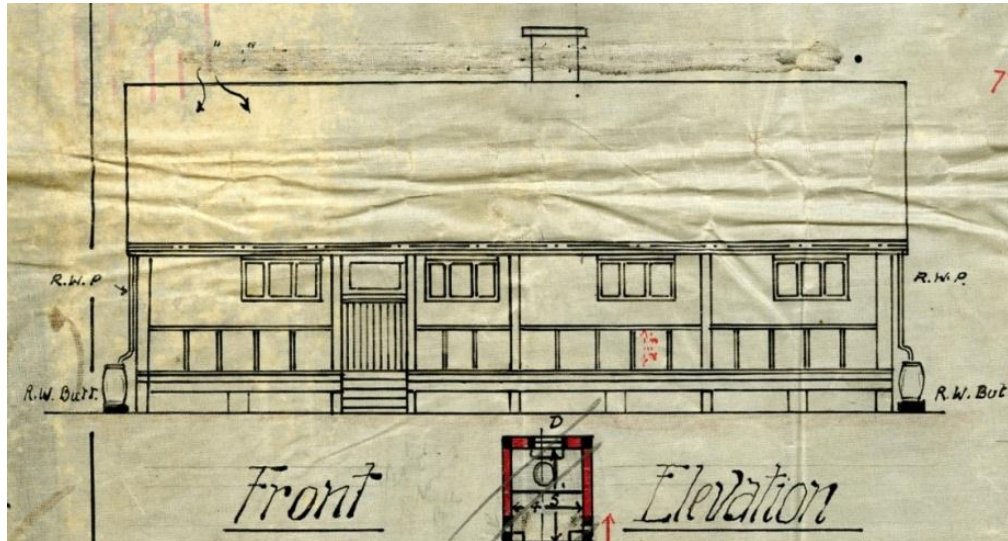


Fig 34

‘Army hut for Mr William Aldridge, London Rd, Patcham.’ 1921.<sup>284</sup>

Source: ESRO

Ward’s remark above has a resonance for this study where the key themes include the concept of suburbs evolving through a lifecycle. As observed by Ward this evolution can transform the often haphazard assemblage of dwellings into an area of housing more resembling the commonly held image of suburbia. An example of this can be seen at Binley Woods (fig 38) where the colony of £25 army huts of 1921 has become one of highly desirable properties, some fetching close to £400,000 in 2012.<sup>285</sup>

<sup>283</sup> Hall P and Ward C (1998) *Sociable cities: the legacy of Ebenezer Howard* p72

<sup>284</sup> ESRO.DB/57/211/A05

<sup>285</sup> [www.nestoria.co.uk/binley-woods/property/buy](http://www.nestoria.co.uk/binley-woods/property/buy) accessed 15.5.2012



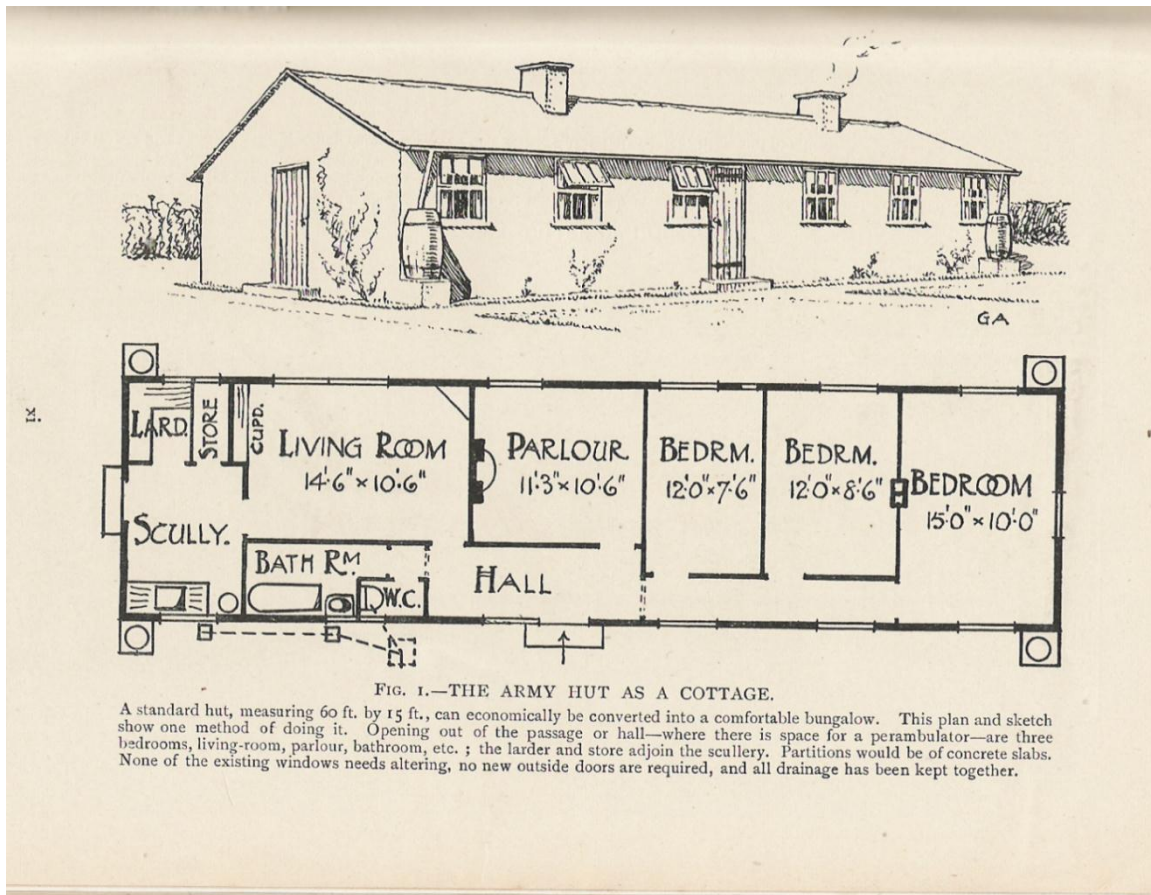


Fig 35

The army hut as a cottage

Source: Allen. *The Cheap Cottage and Small House* 1919<sup>286</sup>

*'Another popular source ... was that of surplus army huts from the First World War. In the development of new smallholdings, this proved to be as attractive to official bodies as to private individuals.'*<sup>287</sup>

The following sections of this chapter are arranged in an approximately chronological sequence of areal development, though it must be emphasised that many of the developments were taking place contemporaneously.

<sup>286</sup> Allen G (1919) *The Cheap Cottage and Small House* p xi

<sup>287</sup> Hardy & Ward (1998) p3

## Sweet Hill Estate.

*'Scattered squalor quickly defied any concerted plan.'*<sup>288</sup>



Fig 36  
Harrington family, Sweet Hill Estate c1924.  
Source: Arlette Hinton

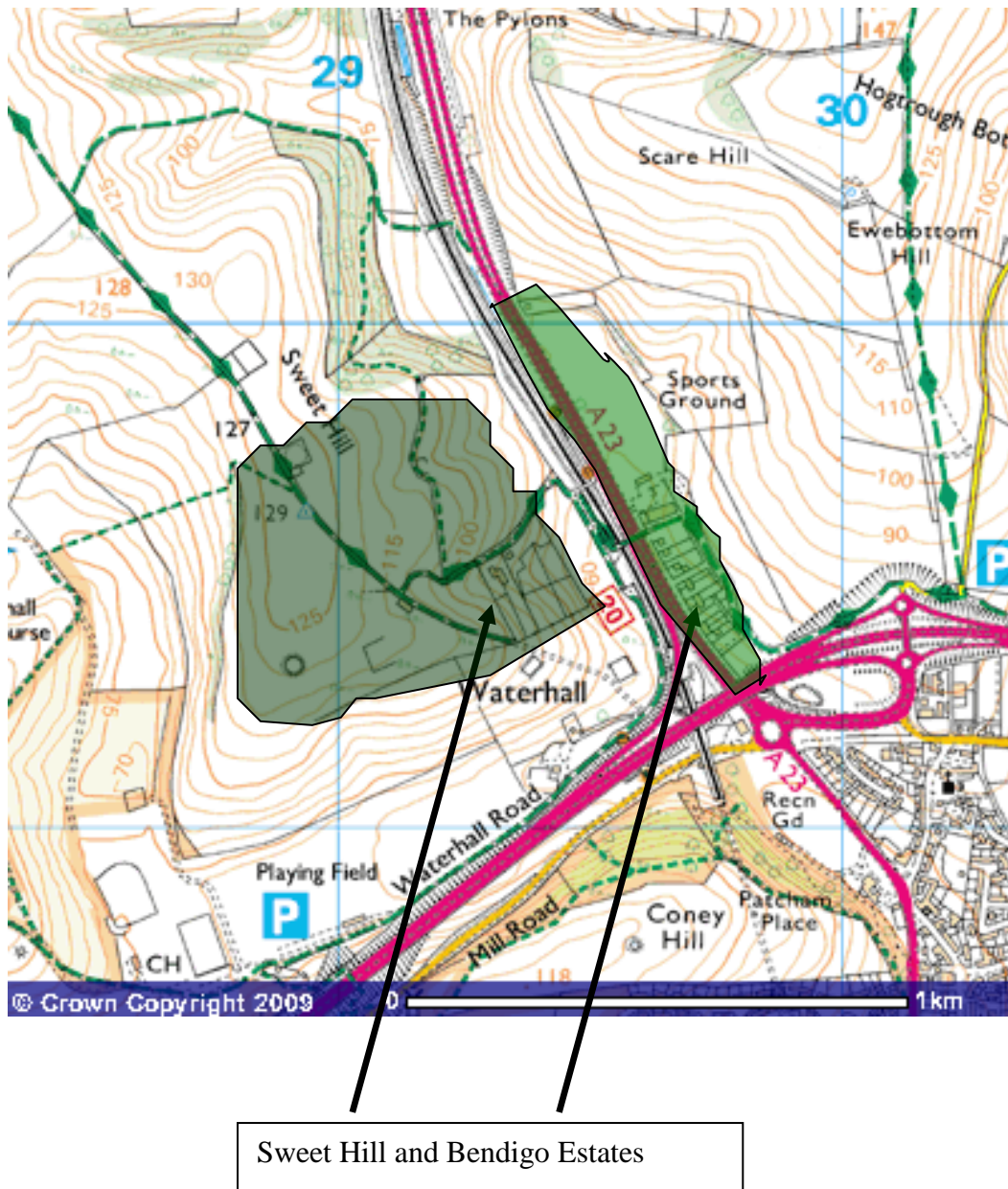
Arlette Hinton's mother and grand parents

"The inhabitants of Sweet Hill Estate are I think in many instances interested in fowls and pigs and things of that sort and of course you are liable to get pigstyes, cowsheds, fowl huts and things of that sort."

Mr. Tyldesley Jones KC. 1924<sup>289</sup>

<sup>288</sup> Davis p1

<sup>289</sup> ESRO DB.B1.15 Brighton Corporation Water Bill 1924 p9



Sweet Hill and Bendigo Estates

Fig 37

Sweet Hill & Bendigo

Source: Ordnance Survey<sup>290</sup>

© Crown copyright Ordnance Survey. All rights reserved

The 'shack-and-track' developments that were the gateway to interwar Brighton, but before 1928 developing outside municipal control in a neighbouring authority, Steyning East Rural District Council.

<sup>290</sup> Get-a-Map. Accessed 10.12.2009

Sweet Hill is recorded in the records of the Rural District Council and in the court case papers of the Brighton Water Bill, but owing to its short life of occupancy there is almost no secondary source available. This missing link is more than adequately filled by the wealth of reminiscence obtained during the course of this research, apart from the interviewees who lived there I was able to meet the children and grandchildren of some of the settlers; the major source was the account of HD Davis. His account vividly describes this aspect of interwar suburbia -

‘...members of the public were sold small plots of land, many quite small parcels of a few acres in area. Buyers were anxious to establish ownership, and fences were quickly positioned, and there followed frenetic activity to make shacks and shelters...there seemed to be no restriction regarding building regulations. In consequence, all kinds of structures, shacks, and shelters sprang up dotted over the hilltop landscape with no regard whatever to aesthetic considerations or care for the environment. Scattered squalor quickly defied any concerted plan; there was no plan or estate management, but a display of individual creative handiworks, mostly displayed in a mixture of wood and sheet iron.’<sup>291</sup>

The appearance of these makeshift dwellings was not going unnoticed by the planning authorities, for though sanctioned by central government, their construction created a raft of difficulties for the local planners in the areas bordering Greater Brighton, in the case of the Sweet Hill and Bendigo examples above - Steyning East Rural District Council (SERDC); whilst Douglas Holland’s ‘hotchpotch’ dwelling fell under the jurisdiction of Newhaven RDC. There is a single Minute book surviving for SERDC and that covers the two years from the summer of 1921, a crucial period in the history of Patcham.

It is the Surveyor’s reports within these SERDC Minutes which is the source for this section as it is a clear and precise window into the development that was occurring on the fringe of the conurbation, and one that was being repeated across the country, as urban fringes became more accessible through private and public transport improvements, and as large estates came on the market to be broken up into smaller units. To illustrate the intricate processes involved in SERDC combating the early post-war sprawl, the correspondence around one dwelling has been chosen for a close study; thus taking the context in a range from the national picture down to the single cabin dwelling.

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<sup>291</sup> Davis p1



Until the 1920s there were no huge problems for SERDC to deal with, their area of responsibility being the rural downland hinterland to the Greater Brighton conurbation, an area of mainly small communities struggling with the long period of agricultural decline that had beset the area. Much of the land encircling Brighton and Hove was in the estate of the Marquis of Abergavenny and many of the communities within it were agricultural villages of mills and barns, farmyards and cottages. There was some large detached suburban housing on the northern fringes of Brighton and Hove that had spilled over the administrative boundaries along the Dyke Road ridge and the London Road valley, but the workings of the SERDC must have been little troubled, indeed the area of the SERDC was so extensive that some parts of the area must have seemed to be out of sight and out of mind; from Southwick Town Hall to the eastern boundary of SERDC at Moulescoomb (6.5 miles) was the same distance to Hurstpierpoint in the north beyond the South Downs and West Worthing along the coast.

In July 1921 the situation changed dramatically with the sale of 1300 acres of the manorial Abergavenny estate, and this precipitated a rush of development that caused SERDC and their officials an immense amount of correspondence and effort in attempting to stem the tide of inappropriate housing that was breaking out on the downland dip slopes and valleys. The first council meeting recorded in this volume was on July 5<sup>th</sup> 1921, this was four days before the Abergavenny sale and was to be the start of a turbulent series of Housing Ministry letters, applicants obfuscations and District Surveyors detailed reports, all revolving around the issue of controlling inappropriate and sometimes illegal housing schemes, although 'schemes' is too grand a term for the bulk of these applications as most were for individual properties, some of which were merely wooden huts.<sup>292</sup> The SERDC Surveyor, George Warr, compiled a monthly report for the planning committee and from the first page the housing issues arising in Patcham are prominent, they are the second item of the agenda, after sorting out the salary of, amongst others, the splendidly medieval sounding - 'Inspector of Nuisances'.

West of the London Road beyond the railway line, lay an area of open rising downland

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<sup>292</sup> ESRO ABE 18/ 0; ESRO DM/A1/1 p1-4

which in the 1842 Patcham Tithe Survey listed the field names as Lambland, Mile Post Piece, Chalk Pit Piece and Craney Bottom, culminating with the hill top enclosure of Sweet Hill.<sup>293</sup> The latter name was to appear frequently over the coming months, and cropped up each following month as dubious plan followed dubious plan, and the roundabout of District Clerk's letters, solicitor's replies, Ministry intervention, SERDC counter-arguments and threats of Council demolition, grew and grew. Housing in this area was limited, figures compiled from the archive maintained by Brighton and Hove Building Control (BHBC) show permissions were granted for 18 dwellings by the end of 1922, as compared to only five permissions given for the whole of the period from 1900.

It is difficult to come up with accurate housing figures for this period for a range of factors; this surviving Minute Book only contains the detail of applications for 25 properties in the study area during 1921 with a further 59 applications the following year for the same area. The figures compiled from the BHBC are based on information contained in their Building Control record cards, but these are only held for extant dwellings, any demolished in the past 80 years do not have record cards. Many of the applications and subsequent constructions were in fact demolished, in the case of Sweet Hill, virtually the entire estate, so only a partial picture can be obtained. What does come across from the SERDC Minutes is the relentless surge of new developments, as can be seen from the entries for one month, December 1921 -

- 'd)...a brick built bungalow in the London Road for Mr J Brown
- e)...a reconstructed army hut                      "                      Mr Ledson [Leason?] Jones
- f)                      "                      "                      Mr ER Roberts
- g) the following on the Sweet Hill Estate...a store for Mr W Knight on plot 77
- h) ...a bungalow with rubble walls for Mr Holder on plot 142
- I) ...a reconstructed army hut for Mr TD Detman [Detmarr?] on plot 206
- j) ...                      "                      Mr Greenwood on plot 116-118
- k)...                      "                      Mr Dickenson plot 19
- l)                      "                      Mr AA Wilson plot 110
- m)                      "                      Mr T Davies plot 20-21
- n)                      "                      Mr G Thornton plot 16-17
- o)                      "                      Mr W Johnstone plot 207
- p)                      "                      Mr Barnard plot 2
- q)                      "                      Mr RW Ward plot 161
- r)                      "                      Mr Dudley Scott [no plot number given, but

<sup>293</sup> ESRO TD/E 46 Patcham tithe survey

Plot 27 from another source]’<sup>294</sup>

‘...I beg to report that I have had some further correspondence with Mr Gasson the owner of the Sweet Hill Estate ... but without any satisfactory result.’<sup>295</sup>

This statement by G.W.Warr could serve as a constant for the whole of Sweet Hill’s four year history. The environmental historian John Sheail has written up this assault on the landscape of Sweet Hill. He drew on an extensive archive mainly drawn from the Brighton Water Bill 1924 documentation held at ESRO, but not the SERDC source. The two sources taken together reveal a classic example of plotland development. This thesis will not explore this latter aspect too far as it has been covered in its national and international forms by Hardy and Ward looking at the broad picture and in a localised study by Fry, on Binley Woods estate in Warwickshire. This latter is a useful comparison to Sweet Hill as unlike the Patcham plotland it has survived, and evolved into a neat suburb with only plot layout and street names surviving from the early 1920s. In his work on the Brighton water supply, Sheail looks in some detail at the development of Sweet Hill, he states -

‘...the Corporation missed its chance to acquire all the land around the (pumping) station, when further parts of the Abergavenny estate were auctioned in 1921. Although a bid of £1300 was made for Sweet Hill...the land was withdrawn as being £200 below the reserved price. Before the Corporation representative could be given fresh instructions, it was ‘snapped up’ by a local estate developer, Mr Gasson, who straight away divided the area of 243 acres into 208 plots of varying sizes, ostensibly for small holdings, poultry farms, and similar purposes’<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> ESRO QDP/ 748 /1 map

<sup>295</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p41; ESRO DB/56/2; ESRO DM/A1/1 p12.1 p41; Brighton and Hove Building Control [BHBC] file card archive. Hove Town Hall

<sup>296</sup> Sheail J (1992) The South Downs and Brighton’s water supplies *Southern History* v14 p94. .



Fig 38

‘Track and Shack’ plots, Ferndale Road, Binley Woods, Warwickshire  
Source: author’s own image 4.1.2007

Ferndale Road, Binley Woods emphasises the bucolic nature of road naming in the suburbs and belies the harsh existence of the 1920s settlers -  
‘[the name]...presumably devised by the builders to hint at the romance of the rural wooded surroundings...’<sup>297</sup>

Sheail’s reading of events here needs a caveat; the typewritten document produced on the day after the sale by Mr Gaisford, steward of the Abergavenny estate, shows Lot 5 (Sweet Hill) to be purchased by G.Blake of the Watford Development Corporation for £1450, but in the same bundle of documents is a handwritten sheet of thin blue paper, which shows a slightly different sequence of events -

‘Lot 5a	238a 3r 29p Thomas Gasson esq. 251 Elm Grove, Brighton
Lot 5b	4 ½ acres George Blake esq. 36 Camomile St. Bishopsgate EC’ <sup>298</sup>

As Gasson ended up with the whole of Lot 5 it has to be assumed that he was linked to the Watford Development Corporation. The Surveyor was increasingly concerned with the amount and style of property that was being proposed and he noted in December -

‘I have also interviewed a deputation from a meeting which was convened of thirty of the plotholders and I am informed that the Brighton Corporation require

<sup>297</sup> Fry p141

<sup>298</sup> ABE 18/ 0; ESRO DM/A1/1 p42



payment in advance before laying on a supply of water to the Estate as to which no arrangements have been made up to the present. The majority of the plans submitted now comply with the requirements of the Councils Byelaws with respect to the New Buildings, but no plans have been submitted for the construction of roads, and the plot holders contend they are not and do not intend to lay out new streets. The whole portion with regard to this is most unsatisfactory and I consider it is advisable for the council to consider the plans as a whole and to adopt some definite and well-defined policy with respect to the laying out of the Estate and the construction of the buildings, which it is desired to erect. The total number of building plans deposited up to date is 12 but I am informed that there are at least 22 who wish to erect bungalows on their plots at the present time and that the number will probably be greater still.<sup>299</sup>

The wider concerns of the council, the factor that caused the ultimate demise of the whole of the Sweet Hill Estate are noted in this reference from the Surveyor -

‘It was also resolved that the depositor of the plans be informed that the proposed Buildings cannot be occupied as dwelling houses until Certificates have been obtained from the Council to the effect that there is a supply of water available within a reasonable distance of the premises...the Surveyor was authorised to state that if a permanent water supply were laid onto the estate across one or both of the bridges over the railway, so as to be available for use from a standpipe or otherwise, the Council would consider this a sufficient supply of water for a limited number of houses and further that the byelaws with respect to drainage and the construction of watertight cesspools will be strictly enforced on account of the proximity of the Brighton Corporation Waterworks.’<sup>300</sup>

At the January 1922 meeting the Surveyor presenting his monthly list of applications and resolutions, increasingly for huts as dwellings, six on Sweet Hill, three in Bendigo, one with a garage and bungalow accompanying -

‘In the case of buildings upon Sweet Hill Estate approval has been given in similar cases subject to the building being removed at any time after the receipt of 6 months’ notice from the Council to do so. Similar buildings in other parts of the District have been approved for a period of 10 years, at the end of which period the matter would be reconsidered.’<sup>301</sup>

On the 14<sup>th</sup> February 1922 at the monthly meeting, the Clerk read letters from the Ministry of Health which were a reflection of the wider concerns of central government to the burgeoning suburban sprawl and the potential future problems with regard to water

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<sup>299</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p42

<sup>300</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p43; ABE 18/0; ESRO DM/A1/1 p43.

<sup>301</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p51

supply and waste water disposal -

‘With reference to arrangements for water supply and disposal of sewage in connection with the development of the Sweet Hill Estate, and forwarding for the information of the Council...resolved that the full facts respecting arrangements for water supply and disposal of sewage on the estate be submitted to the Ministry of Health’<sup>302</sup>

Still the applications came in, for three bungalows in Bendigo, an army hut on Sweet Hill and possibly the earliest application for a barn conversion in Sussex yet recorded, on February 14<sup>th</sup> 1922, at Sweet Hill Barn.



Fig 39  
The Sentinel, Sweet Hill estate c1930  
Source: Mrs M. Verrall

Not all of Sweet Hill residents were ramshackle plotlanders. Herbert Weightman at The Sentinel lit his hen houses with electric light from a generator, owned the first car on the hill, and sent his daughter (Marguerite Verrall) to Kendrick House private school at Preston Park, Brighton.<sup>303</sup>

The council had grave misgivings about this whole scheme with the Surveyor listing problems of access, road provision, number of proposed plots and the general ramshackle

<sup>302</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p61

<sup>303</sup> M.Verrall pers.comm 20.2.2006

nature of it all; it was everything the social commentators of the period, as was seen in chapter four, objected to; an exposed hillside, adjacent to, and highly visible from a major highway, in a social landscape which was developing a conscience with regard to 'environmental issues'. At the end of the Surveyor's report it was clear that this February meeting was getting to grips with an issue - water - which in a curious twist of fate, as an effluent problem, would bring about the virtual extinction of the settlement -

'With reference to the communications received from the Ministry of Health respecting the erection of houses upon the Sweet Hill Estate I beg to point out that a report was presented upon this matter at the meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> December last, in consequence of which the whole question of the development of this Estate was fully considered. Up to the present no plan of the proposed layout of this estate has been submitted for the approval of the Council, but a copy of the estate plan has been obtained unofficially from the Architect to the Estate. An inspection of this plan shows that access to the Estate is obtained by means of two narrow accommodation bridges over the railway. A number of proposed roads are shown chiefly contouring the steep hillside and although no levels are indicated the gradient must in many cases be considerable. The layout is extremely unsatisfactory the sole object being obviously to obtain as many separate plots as possible; there are eight dead ends to the various branch roads shown on the plan. It is very evident that the Estate cannot be developed for building purposes except at a prohibitive cost, and that under present conditions it is a practical impossibility that the Byelaws with regard to new streets can be complied with. At present there is no means of water supply available upon the Estate and I have been informed by the Brighton waterworks Engineer that he estimates the cost of providing and laying the necessary water mains at £6000. One of the pumping stations of the Brighton Corporation Water Company closely adjoins this Estate and I believe the adits run very near to if not actually under the Estate itself. It is therefore of the greatest importance that should any houses be erected thereon, the means of drainage should be into water tight cesspools and even then there will always be a certain risk of pollution. It is very unlikely the Brighton Corporation will grant any facilities for the development of this Estate for building purposes. For these reasons the Council desire to prevent the formation of any new streets upon this Estate by the gradual erection of independent buildings. At the same time in view of the acute housing shortage and of the unfortunate position in which some of the plotholders are placed the Council did not feel justified in entirely vetoing the erection of building on the Estate, but in order to retain a certain amount of control and to limit the number of houses as far as possible they have adopted the expedient of approving a limited number as temporary buildings.'<sup>304</sup>

This policy of allowing these temporary buildings was a way around the chronic housing

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<sup>304</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p61

shortages of the early 1920s, the Housing and Town Planning Act 1919 allowed for local authorities to grant 'Temporary Building' status which meant that the Council retained a six month clearance order for the building; a factor which did nothing to ensure a decent standard of housing, rather it achieved the opposite. The Council concedes here that the estate developers are the culprits, not the actual occupants of the assorted shacks.

District Councils had another weapon in their armoury of measures to ensure a steady flow of housing that met Ministry of Health regulations; this was the 'Temporary Relaxation of Building Byelaws Regulations 1920' which allowed Councils to sanction a building but still retained rights of removal after 10 years. One case in particular stands out from the mass of local authority terminology and legal niceties and that is the case of the Scott family who occupied two nearby sites on the south west corner of the estate, plot numbers 23 and 27 - 'buildings occupied as dwellings and market garden.'<sup>305</sup>

'It was also resolved that the Clerk write to Mr Scott who has erected and is occupying a wooden hut at the Sweet Hill Estate, which does not comply with the provisions of the Byelaws of the Council with respect to the construction of new buildings and request him to show cause why the said hut should not be forthwith removed or pulled down or proceedings taken against him under Section 103 and 104 of the said Byelaws.'<sup>306</sup>

Mr Scott, and his seemingly more resilient wife, were to cause the Clerk and Surveyor of SERDC a deal of work over the coming months, and the Scotts serve as a good example of the complexities of the 1920's housing picture when seen at the level of an individual property. The Scotts were no nearer to obtaining permission to dwell on Sweet Hill -

'The Inspector of Nuisances reported that Mr Henry Scott was still in occupation of a certain dwelling house situate at Valley Farm, Sweet Hill Estate and that the notice served on Mr Scott on 17 March 1922 to vacate the premises had not been complied with (no water certificate) Scott had committed an offence ...in respect to the New Streets and Buildings by erecting a new building at Valley Farm, Sweet Hill Estate without submitting plans...and which building is constructed in such a manner as not to comply...and by occupying...before the same has been certified by the Surveyor to be in his opinion fit in every respect for human habitation...resolved ...notice be served on Mr Scott requiring him on or before 3 June 1922...to show cause why such work should not be removed, altered or pulled down.'

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<sup>305</sup> ESRO DB/B1/15 *Brighton Corporation Water Bill 1924*

<sup>306</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p69

The Scotts had not moved -

‘...considered notice served on Mr Scott of Valley Farm, Sweet Hill Estate...notice to be adjourned for one month.’

Unexplained in the Minutes, the correspondence to the Scotts was now all directed to and from Mrs Scott -

‘letter from solicitors of Mrs Scott stating that (she) is prepared to undertake in the event of her not being able to obtain a water certificate in the meantime to vacate the building which she and her husband and family are now occupying upon the Sweet Hill Estate within six months from the 27 June 1922. After consideration...period is too long...will permit occupation temporarily for a further 3 months.’<sup>307</sup>

Mrs Scott went on the offensive, taking legal action against the District Council, as it turned out, to an unsuccessful conclusion -

‘proceedings taken against the Council by Mrs Scott dismissed by justices...proceedings taken against Mrs Scott by Council for occupying without a proper water supply - convicted, fined 10/- or 6 days imprisonment.’<sup>308</sup>

Mrs Scott was still obdurate and showed no signs of vacating the downland slopes; again the Clerk was instructed to take further legal action -

‘Letter to Mrs Scott’s solicitors giving her two weeks to reply to the undertaking of 5<sup>th</sup> July ...the council will give instructions for the dwelling now in the occupation of Mrs Scott and family to be pulled down.

Letter from Mrs Scott’s solicitors that she will undertake to vacate premises on Sweet Hill Estate within period specified by council. Resolved to have Mrs Scott sign a formal undertaking to that effect’<sup>309</sup>

The Surveyor was well aware of the chronic situation that had built up in the distant downland surrounding Patcham and he was increasingly concerned that his powers to control the plotlands were limited by the lack of a central planning document. The following passage from 29<sup>th</sup> August 1922 notes how rapidly this situation had developed, the time lapse from agricultural land to urban fringe suburbia being barely eight months -

‘I beg to direct the attention of the Council to the extent to which the land north of the village of Patcham is being developed for building purposes apparently without any definite plan or much consideration having been given to possible requirements in the future. Up to the latter end of last year this district was a

<sup>307</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p94; p95; p98; p99

<sup>308</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p100

<sup>309</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p107; p117

purely agricultural one with no indication of probable development for building purposes. The land has now been sold and certain blocks have been bought up by speculators, which have been divided into comparatively small plots, a large number of which have been sold for building purposes. Since December of last year a large number of plans have been submitted for house and bungalows to be erected upon these plots, the number of plans approved are as follows; -

On the Sweet Hill Estate	14
On the Bendigo Estate	21

The greater number of these plots are outside the area of the Town Planning scheme, which is in course of preparation...in my opinion it is desirable to extend the area of the scheme so as to include this portion of the district. I also strongly recommend that steps be taken to approach the landowners concerned with a view to the preparation of a definite scheme for the future layout and development of the area upon consistent lines. If this is not done there is a danger of the frontages upon the existing roads being built up in such a way as to prevent through communication in the future.’<sup>310</sup>

The ‘shack and tracks’ were massing on Sweet Hill and Bendigo, their untoward appearance and chaotic assemblage were defying all attempts by Mr Warr to stem their flow, however the Scotts still took up much of his administrative time -

‘A letter was received from Messrs Graham Hooper and Betteridge forwarding undertaking given by Mrs Scott to vacate certain premises on Sweet Hill Estate Patcham on or before the 5<sup>th</sup> October 1922.’<sup>311</sup>

The Council were no nearer removing the Scott family, as Mrs Scott had found yet another ploy to side-step the legal process of removal -

‘a letter was read from Mrs Scott of Valley Farm, Green Deane and Sweet Hill, stating that she has been unable to obtain residential accommodation and asking to be allowed to remain in residence on her premises for dwelling purposes for a further period. Resolved...Council permit Mrs Scott to continue ...for a further period of three months expiring on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 1923.’<sup>312</sup>

Belatedly, Thomas Gasson was moving in the direction of the District planners with tentative proposals to bring his hillside settlements into the SERDC administrative fold -

‘The Surveyor submitted plans received from Mr Thomas Gasson for the proposed layout of the Sweet Hill Estate under the provisions of the Housing, Town Planning etc. Act and it was resolved that Mr Gasson be

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<sup>310</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p118

<sup>311</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p123

<sup>312</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p13; p140; p141

informed the Council are willing to consider his proposals with a view to incorporating the same in the Town Planning Scheme which is being prepared for a portion of the district subject to Mr Gasson undertaking to pay all reasonable costs and expenses incurred by the Council in preparing the necessary plans in connection with the matter. The Council considered the application of Mr HA Davis for a water certificate in respect of a bungalow on Sweet Hill Estate ... resolved that the application be refused on the grounds that the proposed means of water supply from a rainwater tank is considered unsatisfactory.<sup>313</sup> ... The owner of Sweet Hill Estate has agreed to pay the cost of preliminary levels and surveys up to an amount not exceeding ten guineas and I hope to present a further report in respect of this estate at the next meeting of the Council.’<sup>314</sup>

The HA Davis referred to above is the father of HD Davis whose unpublished memoir has provided much local colour to this section, not least his epithet - ‘scattered squalor’. Yet more correspondence was taking place with the Scott family as they settled in for another winter stay; it being nearly a year since the legal process had started. Bearing in mind this dwelling was an old army hut, nearly 400 ft. up on an open downland slope, the winter must have been a trying time, as the hillside was not wooded and the supply of coal must have been both difficult and sporadic; the nearest supply was only obtainable a mile away down the steep hill in Patcham village.

‘A letter was read from Mrs Scott of Valley Farm, Sweet Hill Estate applying for permission to continue in residence at the bungalow erected by her on her premises. Resolved that the Medical Officer of Health and the Inspector of Nuisances visit the premises and report upon the proposed means of improved water supply to the bungalow... a report was received from the Medical Officer of Health with reference to the water supply at Sweet Hill Estate and the consideration of the same was deferred. Surveyor’s report - that numerous applications continue to be made for the erection of buildings on Sweet Hill Estate. In my opinion the only way in which this difficult matter can be satisfactorily dealt with is by the means of a Town Planning Scheme, which I consider should be prepared and submitted by the owner. Resolved - that the owner be requested to prepare and submit to the Council for consideration a Town Planning Scheme for the Sweet Hill Estate.<sup>315</sup> ... that Mrs Scott be requested to show cause why the building at present in her occupation temporarily, should not forthwith be removed or pulled down.’<sup>316</sup>

This was now April and 16 months had elapsed since the start of proceedings on the Scott

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<sup>313</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p149; p150-151

<sup>314</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p164

<sup>315</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p189; p206

<sup>316</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p216-217

family, and there was no resolution in sight -

‘a letter was read from Mrs Scott of Valley Farm, Sweet Hill Estate with reference to the premises in her occupation... it was resolved that Mrs Scott be informed that unless proper plans are submitted to the District Council on or before the 4<sup>th</sup> June 1923 in regard to the said premises and in compliance with the Byelaws in force in the rural District, the District Council will take proceedings against her for contravention of the Byelaws.’<sup>317</sup>

The rigours of army hut life during a downland winter were going to be a thing of the past, because at the June Council meeting the following proposal was submitted -

‘a letter was read from Mrs Scott forwarding plans for the erection of a bungalow on Sweet Hill Estate. Resolved that Mrs Scott be informed that the plan does not appear to be in order and has been formally disapproved by the Council and requested to submit further particulars in regard thereto. Surveyor’s report - ...the district is now developing so much more rapidly than in the past that the further development of the proposed (Town Planning) Scheme is becoming very necessary.’<sup>318</sup>

The lone SERDC Minute book tantalisingly ends here, and with it the detail of the housing situation on Sweet Hill. The accompanying Patcham Parish Council Minutes are rather curiously devoid of any comment on the situation, and as they are restricted for research by their poor physical condition, only material up to July 1923 is accessible. Sheail’s *Southern History* paper reconstructs the later events from the archive of the Brighton Borough Council; disturbed by the prospect of uncontrolled housing and inadequate provision for domestic sewage removal, the Brighton authorities applied for a Bill in 1924 to enable compulsory purchase of the land to be made and compensation paid to the settlers when the clearances occurred. The settlers did not give up easily; there are two simple typed letters from the shack dwellers to the House of Lords which testify to their efforts to remain in their rural idyll. The viewpoint of the settlers is one that is not contained in any archive material yet accessed; the existence of the Sweet Hill protesters viewpoint only came to light when one of the few existing hill occupiers revealed a typescript contained amongst their legal papers. The property was one that had been occupied by George Harrington, an early and long-lived settler, and it must be presumed

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<sup>317</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p226

<sup>318</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p236; p238



that these documents were part of his protest. Mr Harrington was a true frontiersman, as well as living far out on the urban fringe, he shot rabbits from his window, grew, dried and smoked his own tobacco and had an illicit whisky still on his smallholding! The plea to the Lords ended with a reminder that the Great War was only too vivid a memory to those seeking a new downland life -

‘Our sentimental side of the matter in having the pleasure of our own freeholds, little places whereon, after the turmoil of the last few years, we may settle down in peace and security as our own masters until the end of our days...before you decide the issue, you will keep the vision of our humble selves, our misfortunes and struggles during the last three years, many of us ex-service men with wounds and other [sic] equally unfortunate in civil life.’<sup>319</sup>

This latter exemplifies the case with much historical research, that there are only glimpses to be obtained into the past, and when taken from the volumes of local government minutes or other official sources there can be a curiously detached air to the reported events, for example a major theme of this section was the long running dispute with the Scotts and their hut on the hill, yet there is no known Scott archive to balance that SERDC view. Similarly the printed evidence of the Brighton Water Bill needs the opposite view of the shack and track dwellers to give it some perspective. As a result of a fortunate series of enquiries, I was able to obtain a typewritten account of life on Sweet Hill in 1923. The original was dictated by Mr HD Davis to the late Mrs EM Gorton in the 1990s after a span of 75 years since the events occurred. The Davis account is a unique personal view of Sweet Hill life in 1923; this brought all of the tedious SERDC Minutes and accounts to life; 12 typewritten pages long, it is told as the life of a small boy in the raw hillside colony, and provides the view from the hill to counterpoint the view from the Council committee rooms of SERDC. Mr Davis evokes the life of the settlers, portraying an existence akin to frontier settlers in the colonies -

‘Buyers were anxious to establish ownership and fences were quickly positioned, and there followed frenetic activity to make shacks and shelters...there seemed to be no restriction regarding building regulations... all kinds of structures, shacks, and shelters sprang up dotted over the hilltop landscape with no regard whatever to aesthetic considerations or care for the environment. Scattered squalor quickly

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<sup>319</sup> Mrs W. Davis [Harrington’s grand-daughter] pers.comm 31.7.2007  
 Mrs Arlette Hinton [Harrington’s grand-daughter] pers.comm 6.6.2007  
 Mrs Rita White [present site owner] pers.comm 22.9.2005; Typed petitions (a/b) to House of Lords from Sweet Hill residents 1924. In possession of Mrs Rita White

defied any concerted plan; there was no plan or estate management, but a display of individual creative handiworks, mostly displayed in a mixture of wood and sheet iron. The wind-swept downs fostered many dreams, most of them thwarted by lack of the required skills, or simply by lack of funds to build; those who did build homes and live in them were few. We were one of the few who built and lived to enjoy only the short time left before the crunch in 1924. My father had ideas of self-sufficiency; he had bought a very fine plot on top of the hill... sometime before occupation my father had bought an ex-army hut, and the hut was in pieces and sections after demolition...they were transported to our plot on Sweet Hill. Men who were skilled in assembly of Army huts quickly erected ours on an elevated position...there was no sink or running water, all our water was collected in a deep tank from rainwater collected from the corrugated iron roof... (structures) were built to house poultry, goats and pigs....our new abode was given the name 'The Highlands' this became our permanent address...frequently building materials were delivered to a plot belonging to a plot owner who was not living there, but would pay a visit at the weekend. Thieves had ample opportunity, even in broad daylight, to spirit away any item that took their fancy. Suspicions and accusations were not far away; but after all, the gypsies were not far from the hill of course, it was not possible to identify one's goods, but some of the stolen materials could be seen incorporated in a building structure in progress on another plot...there was a lovely dewpond within a few yards of our boundary fence...<sup>320</sup>

The minutes of evidence taken at the public enquiry into the Brighton Corporation Water Bill in 1924 contained the damning comment from Mr Tyldesley-Jones KC that -

'The inhabitants of Sweet Hill Estate are I think in many instances interested in fowls and pigs and things of that sort and of course you are liable to get pig styes, cowsheds, fowl huts and things of that sort.'<sup>321</sup>

Mr Davis' sketch (fig 40) confirms the King's Counsel view of Sweet Hill, although the listing in the Bill of - 'store room, garage and tennis courts' - for plot 44 perhaps indicates a less plebeian aspect of 'track-and-shack' than is generally apparent.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Davis p1 p3

<sup>321</sup> ESRO DB/B1/15

<sup>322</sup> ESRO DB/B1/15 p4

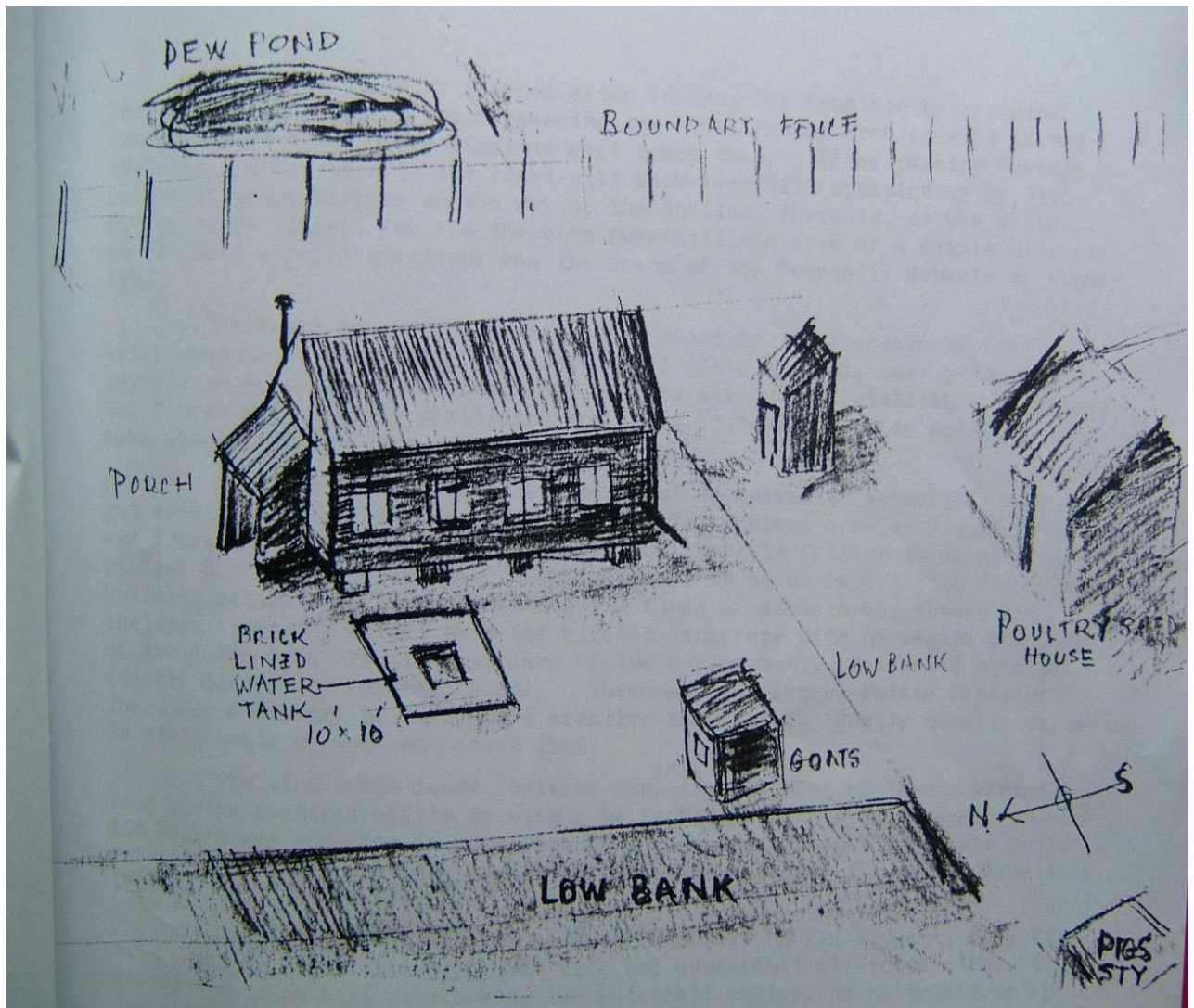


Fig 40  
Plot 14 Sweet Hill estate sketch<sup>323</sup>  
Source: HD Davis account

A sketch by HD Davis of his family abode and smallholding. Note the dewpond in the background that served the Davis family as a water supply...until it was destroyed by Thomas Gasson's hired hands, ensuring the Davis's paid for the company water. Echoes of a 'Wild West' lifestyle.

<sup>323</sup> Davis p13

## 5.4

## Bendigo Estate

*'Land known as the Bendigo estate, about 3½ acres, and on that has been built a much more substantial class of house'*

Mr Tyldesley-Jones KC 1924 <sup>324</sup>



Fig 41

Bendigo estate, London Road, Patcham  
Source: Brighton Corporation Water Bill 1924

*'...there is a danger of the frontages upon the existing roads  
being built up in such a way as to prevent through communication...'* <sup>325</sup>

<sup>324</sup> ESRO QDP/748/1; ESRO DB/B1/15

<sup>325</sup> ESRO QDP 748.1

The original map accompanying the Brighton Water Act 1924 is confusing; as presented here it is correctly orientated, Bendigo is to the east and a corner of Sweet Hill estate is seen to the north-west. Patcham Court Farm has been placed out of its true location by the cartographer and should be off the map to the south-east.

The Surveyors report of 11th October 1921, is the first to give details of housing proposals on the land sold at auction in the July 1921 sale -

‘Plan for a bungalow on the main London Road, north of the Tollgate Cottages for Mr TG Hayward.

Plan of a temporary building on the Smallholdings for Mr Mimmack

(‘I recommend the same be approved, subject to the same being removed at any time after the expiration of six months’ notice in writing to do so.’)<sup>326</sup>

This later appellation was the first indication that the Temporary Act’s time limit for housing was being employed. The Smallholdings were situated on the western slopes of Hollingbury across the line of the (yet to be constructed) Carden Avenue. In an unlikely turn of events for suburban Patcham, the Smallholdings remained as such until the construction of the Hollingbury council estate in the late 1940s. If October’s list was short, it was the thin end of a developer’s wedge that grew in intensity over the next 18 months of the Minutes, as those of November 8<sup>th</sup> indicate -

‘Bungalow, garage and repair shop... main road, Patcham for Mr CE Wise  
Motor Coach garage as above for Mr HA Costerton

two bungalows on the Bendigo estate for Mr Leason Jones

“ “ ER Roberts

“ “ AE Roberts.’

A terse comment was appended by Mr Warr - ‘... [all] be disapproved.’<sup>327</sup>

In April 1922 there is indication that the values were evolving which would be seen as a *sine qua non* for communities such as suburban Patcham, class-consciousness, with this entry in the Minutes - ‘...a converted army hut...for Mr Detmar’ not in itself revelatory, but the accompanying plans show it as - ‘reconstructed *officers*’ hut’. It was however - ‘disapproved’.<sup>328</sup> Near to Mr Detmar in an area named as Sunnybank Estate, C. Percy

<sup>326</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p29

<sup>327</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p35

<sup>328</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p78-79; ESRO DB/D57/211/K

Bower applied for - 'a proposed artists studio (non-residential).'<sup>329</sup> Mr Wise eventually succeeded in his application for a garage (fig 42) but his application for a dwelling was more circumspect, the Minutes record -

'Plan for a proposed temporary timber framed building upon Bendigo estate ...which is proposed to use for human habitation pending the erection of a more permanent building.'<sup>330</sup>

A note from the SERDC planning officer has the building - 'Approved as temporary dwelling to be removed within 3 months.'<sup>331</sup> The difficulty of enforcing the regulations on the occupancy of the assorted huts and bungalows is affirmed by the Minutes -

'...the timber framed bungalow...has since been occupied without any notice of completion or otherwise having been sent in...it is quite possible the owner was under the impression that under the circumstances he was entitled to proceed with the work...the requirements of the byelaws should have been observed.'<sup>332</sup>

Patcham's main road position made it ideal for 'highway functions' as seen in the garage applications and earlier tearoom petrol stores, but it is the bungalow areas that are of interest here; Bendigo (a gold rush mining town in South Australia) was the name of HC Costerton's detached house at the southern end of the village street and he seems to have re-named this stretch of roadside plots on the east of the London Road, which previously had been named Lower Court Laine North and Lower Court Laine South, former arable fields; the name did not stick. Contemporary plans stored at ESRO refer to it variously as Sunny Bank, The Bank, and Patcham Cross. These names are now unknown to current and former local residents, and the cul-de-sac, which serves the 21st century housing, is named Braypool Lane.<sup>333</sup> Housing extended north much further than the existing dwellings and the standard of housing was noted by Tyldesley-Jones -

'...land known as the Bendigo estate, about 3½ acres, and on that has been built a much more substantial class of house.'

This was not a view shared by all observers, and the *Brighton and Hove Herald* recorded the comment of Brighton Councillor Cane in a debate on the Bendigo estate -

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<sup>329</sup> ESRO DB/D57/211/L/4; ESRO DM/A1/1 p119

<sup>330</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p101

<sup>331</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p101

<sup>332</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p118

<sup>333</sup> ESRO TD/E 46; ESRO DB/D57/211/L1; ESRO DB/D57/211/L/4; ESRO DB/D57/211F/1; *Latest Homes* 20.4.05 p50

‘...some of the houses (not many) are well built’.<sup>334</sup>

In 1936 the northern part of Bendigo leading towards The Pylons was demolished to create the Braepool [sic] Recreation ground. The rest of the housing in Bendigo was allowed to remain as the dwellings there were capable of connection to the main sewer along the London Road, and the existing houses along Braypool Lane are the only evidence of the once extensive plotland that covered the area. These are gradually losing their ‘frontier’ feel as their urban fringe location and large sites make them highly suitable for redevelopment; a factor of the lifecycle change that governs all such developments and one noted by Hardy and Ward as a factor in the merging of the distinctive plotlands into a different ‘post-plotland’ landscape. In the tradition of the earlier plotlands the settlement still has a sense of the urban fringe - an air of independence hangs over all, fences are high, buildings unfinished, overgrown plots, rough tracks, it is not an area to ask questions - or expect answers. The RSPCA has its extensive animal sanctuary as the most northerly structure, the barking of the dogs preserving a sense of the interwar fringe. The whole area has been transformed by the creation of the A23/A27 interchange and the re-alignment of the London Road, which has resulted in the dwellings ‘ribboning’ the highway being isolated on a high bank with their original rear doors now functioning as their fronts, a complete re-orientation, adding to the unsettled look and feel of the estate.

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<sup>334</sup> BG 28.3.1925 p1





Fig 42

Bendigo, London Road, Patcham c1925 & c1930.

Source: Peter Booth collection

The ribbon development that was the entrance to the resort.  
Tea rooms, garage, boarding kennels, Sussex Walking and Athletic Club  
and...the Swastika Stores.



The suburban dichotomous existence is seen here at Bendigo in a pictorial form, represented by a pair of family photographs from the album of Mrs Joan Lees, who as a girl lived at a number of the addresses along the Bendigo housing ribbon. One of her addresses was at Maybank, which is the epitome of a 1920s suburban villa.<sup>335</sup> Its location in Bendigo, between the main London Road and the open farm land immediately behind is classic ‘ribbon development’; such suburban growth across the UK brought forth acerbic comment from a wide range of social commentators alarmed at the urban sprawl they generated and the visual intrusion into the rural scene.



Fig 43  
Maybank, Bendigo estate, London road, Patcham 1923-24  
Source: Mrs Joan Lees

*'And still the destruction spreads like a prairie fire. The jerry-built bijou residences creep out along the roads. Beauty is sacrificed on the altar of the speeding motorist.'*<sup>336</sup>

<sup>335</sup> Mrs Joan Lees pers.comm. 6.3.2006

<sup>336</sup> Marshall H (1938) *The rake's progress* (in Williams-Ellis(ed)(1938) *Britain & the Beast* p164

## Old London Road

*'...a stream of water 6 feet wide in places...flowed down the western side of the main (London) road this week.'*<sup>337</sup>



Fig 44

15 Old London Road, Patcham

Source: author's own image 11.5.2006

Formerly *Axholme* 1925. The name comes from the early owners, Thomas & Emily Axe<sup>338</sup>

<sup>337</sup> BG 17.1.1925 p2

<sup>338</sup> ESRO SERDC DB/D57/ 211K; Electoral Roll 1932 ESRO C/C70/223



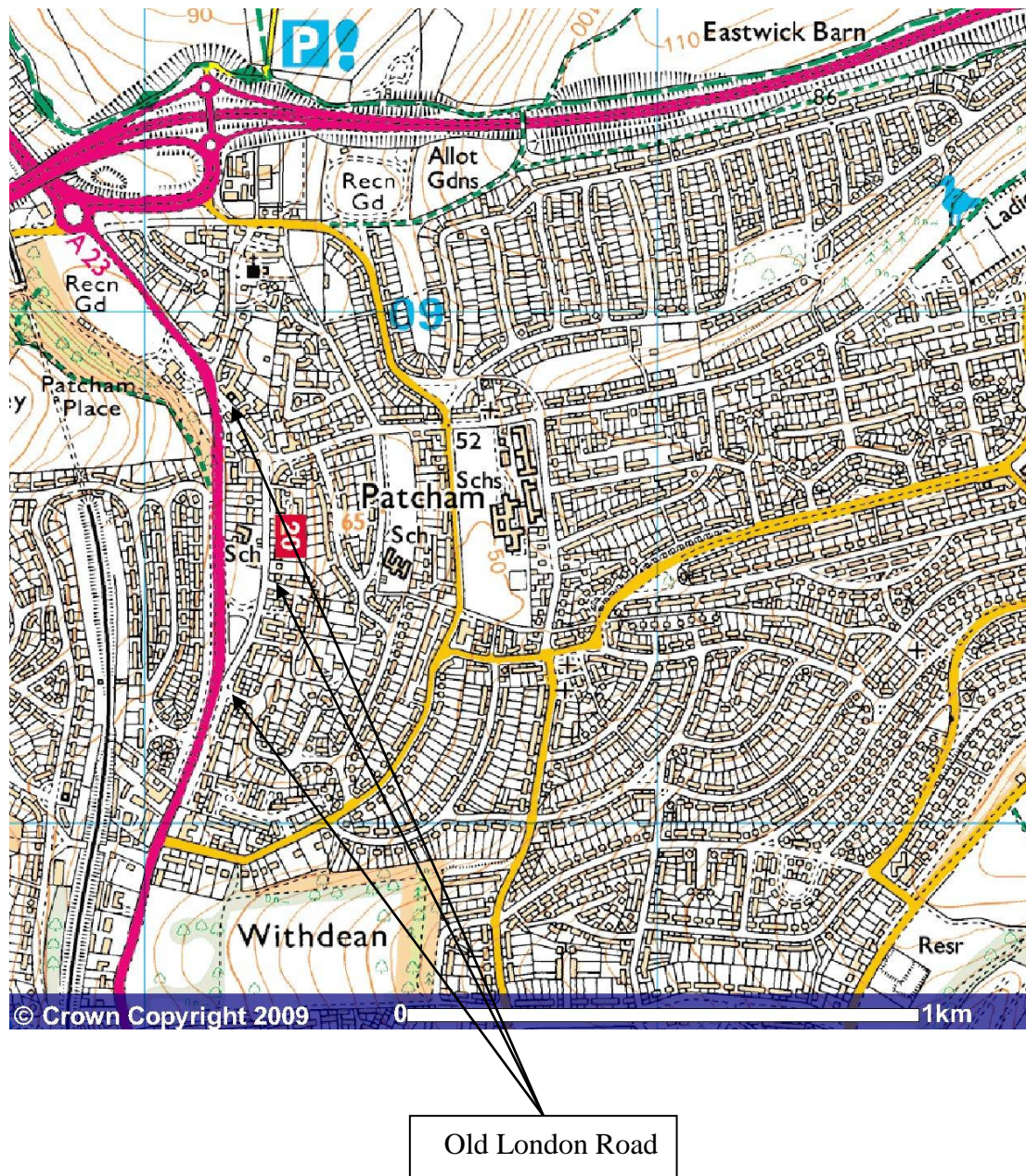


Fig 45

Old London Road

Source: Ordnance Survey

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With the opening of the Patcham By-Pass the village street ceased being a main thoroughfare, the southern end developed as ribbon development, the Black Lion Inn moved to the new roadside as a 'roadhouse' and part of Bramlands Farm became the Peace Gardens; Patcham was rapidly adopting the guise of suburbia.

The highway from London was a key factor in Patcham's economic life, as the village location meant it was the last coaching stop before the descent along the valley into Brighton. However the road that brought the 'highway functions' that were a feature of the pre-war village, its smithy, tavern and tearooms, had become by the 1920s, a troublesome asset; traffic growth was choking the village street and period postcards show house-end billboards urging 'traffic-calming'. As part of the general economic buoyancy of the Brighton area, a bypass to the village was planned and with its opening to the west of the village in 1926, calm descended on the - now - Old London Road. The southern approach to the village, had by the First World War, an assemblage of Edwardian villas set in large grounds that looked out from the rising land east of the road across the cornfields of Bramlands to the wooded slopes of Patcham Place park.

'Conveyance of 2a.1r.25p. Being part of Bramlands Farm, Patcham... for a by-pass road through Patcham - consideration £390.'<sup>339</sup>

The prospect of the bypass removing the choking traffic to the west meant the remaining open space along the old road could be utilised for housing, but also for the Peace Gardens; a haven of relative peace and quiet they contain small leisure buildings, pastiches of classical temples and purportedly from the Wembley British Empire Exhibition of 1924. As was the norm at this period there were no major housing projects envisaged, rather the opposite; individual detached houses and bungalows which filled in the open spaces between the pre-war housing. Developing at the southern end of the village street with its rudimentary services, the properties could be seen as a natural growth extension to the historic core, the style and distribution of the new housing was in contrast to the plotlands rapidly expanding in ribbons and sprawls to the north, as can be seen in the descriptions on the architects plans of July 1928 for 'Zaniah' 44 Old London Road [now demolished]. This was being erected on a plot 50ft wide, no depth is included on the plans but nearby plots are 244 feet and 238 feet deep -

'Proposed house, 3 bedrooms, Crittalls standard square sashes with bars, oak cill, tiles fixed to battens on breeze filling, red brick arch, stocks (bricks) oak doors, Crittalls french doors at rear.'<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> ESRO Aber Box 2 G

<sup>340</sup> BHBC fiche card NB 8186

The major change in the road came after 1935 with the erection opposite each other of the large shopping parades of The Elms and the Brighton Equitable Co-operative stores. (These will be covered in the next chapter). The roll call of house names of the new dwellings emphasised the bucolic nature of the burgeoning suburb - *Sherwood, Two Trees, Meadowside, Mimosa, Wayside, Wild Rose, Downs View*.<sup>341</sup> Occupants of the London Road soon realised why the land was previously undeveloped; in January 1925 -

‘...water from burst springs was flowing down the main London road south of Patcham in greater volume than in the previous day and there was a continuous stream from a hundred yards south of Patcham School to within a like distance of the Preston boundary, a mile of water.’<sup>342</sup>

The Patcham Parish Council Minutes contains a correspondence file commencing in August 3<sup>rd</sup> 1923 from Rev James Holroyd requesting the Abergavenny estate to sell cheaply a piece of land in London Road for a District Nurses cottage, £400 being available to spend, a gift from a Miss Turner, a Brighton philanthropist.<sup>343</sup> The provision of the District Nurses house brought about an interesting chain of correspondence between the Abergavenny estate and the parish council. Ernest Gaisford, estate steward to the Abergavennys offered to sell a plot 40’ x 100’ for £40, in a reply to the vicar of Patcham he stated - ‘...although the plot is in my opinion worth about £120’. But in a letter to the estate solicitors he stated -

‘...in my opinion it is worth £100...the provision of a dwelling house for the Parish Nurse is very desirable for the benefit of the poorer inhabitants’.

The London lawyers dragged their feet over a decision, causing the vicar to write to Gaisford in November of that year - ‘the parish nurse is very anxious about her new home.’ The reason for the delay was revealed in a letter of the same month when the lawyers wrote asking the estate steward -

‘I see that you say that the site, which seems to be less than 1/10 acre is worth, in your opinion £100. Have we much other land in Patcham the value of which is £1000 an acre, or is this an isolated piece?’<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> BHBC archive; ESRO Electoral roll 1932 C/C 70/222

<sup>342</sup> BG 17.1.1925 p2

<sup>343</sup> ESRO ABE 33Y

<sup>344</sup> ESRO ABE 33Y





Fig 46  
District Nurse's bungalow 1923. No1 Old London Road  
Source: authors own image 17.2.2008

The services that Patcham village street performed, shops, Post Office, Black Lion tavern and forge were reinforced with the establishment along the stretch south of the forge, with the establishment of the War Memorial Hall in 1919 and the District Nurses house in 1923, thus extending the functions and maintaining the London Road as the heart of the rapidly growing parish.<sup>345</sup> Within the village core, the change in status of the London Road into the *Old* London Road meant a change in the fortunes of the Black Lion tavern (fig 49) which closed down, re-opening in a new location north of the village core at the north end of the new Patcham bypass, on the site of the former Patcham House. The old Black Lion was a four-square grey and red brick tavern with a stable yard to the rear, reflecting its purpose as a coaching stop on the main road. Its successor was an example of a style, much copied in Brighton at that period, a construction of red brick and stone mullions, informally designated 'Brewer's Tudor'<sup>346</sup>. The new building of 1929 was a revealing microcosm of the rapid changes and stylistic fashions of the newly emerging

<sup>345</sup> BHBC archive

<sup>346</sup> Antram N and Morrice R (2008) *Pevsner architectural guides: Brighton and Hove* p24

suburb. Woodham in *Southern History* has chronicled the spread of this style in a chapter entitled the ‘Reality of Historical Heritage’ -

‘This absorption in British heritage and history also was fulsomely recorded in the Pageantry of Brighton...1928, a three day celebration held under the patronage of the Mayor and Mayoress of Brighton, Alderman and Mrs Charles Kingston.’<sup>347</sup>

Charles Kingston was appropriately the Alderman for Patcham.<sup>348</sup>



Fig 47  
Former Black Lion, nos 110-112 Old London Road  
Source: author's own image 11.5.2006

The size and style of the building reflects its former glories as an important coaching stop on the main London Road, until its relocation in 1929.

<sup>347</sup> Woodham J (1994) Fact, fiction and fantasy: design in Brighton between the wars *Southern History* v16

<sup>348</sup> *Corporation of Brighton, manual for 1931-32*, list of Council. [collection of Mrs M. Elms]





Fig 48

Black Lion Hotel, erected 1929

Source: authors own image 11.5.2006

*'Proposed new hotel at Patcham...November 1928...for Major Beard'*<sup>349</sup>

The 'Brewer's Tudor' of the interwar tavern could also incorporate the 'road-house' style prevalent on many of the new bypasses and arterial roads of the time; often resulting in an uneasy stylistic melange of the faux-antique and the Moderne. The suburban dilemma. The cost of the new hotel was £20,000, Major Beard noted - "The development thus far had not justified so large an outlay..."<sup>350</sup>

<sup>349</sup> BHBC Alts 8552/1

<sup>350</sup> BHH 10.2.1934 p10



## Ladies Mile Road

“A bungalow near Ladies Mile Road for Mr HJ Smith (converted Army Hut)  
 A bungalow on Ladies Mile Road for Mr EJ Atkins (converted railway cars)  
 A plan of a railway carriage converted into a store and scullery in Ladies Mile Road”

(SERDC 1922-23 surveyors report plans)<sup>351</sup>

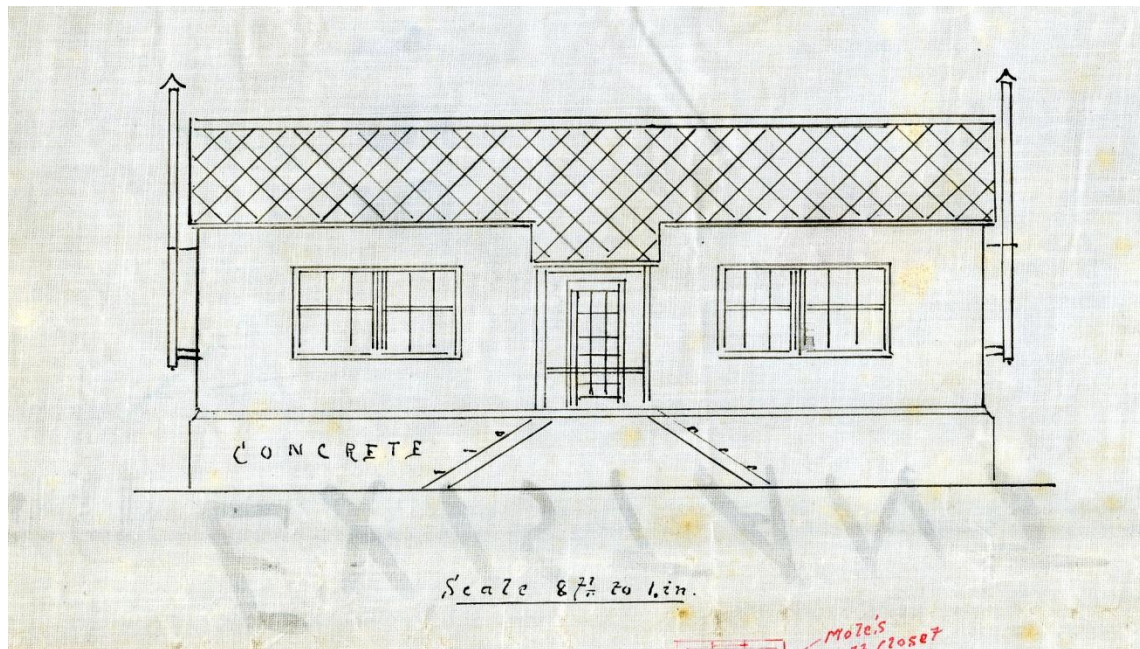


Fig 49

*'Army hut, Ladies Mile/Warmdene Avenue for HJ Smith 1922'*<sup>352</sup>

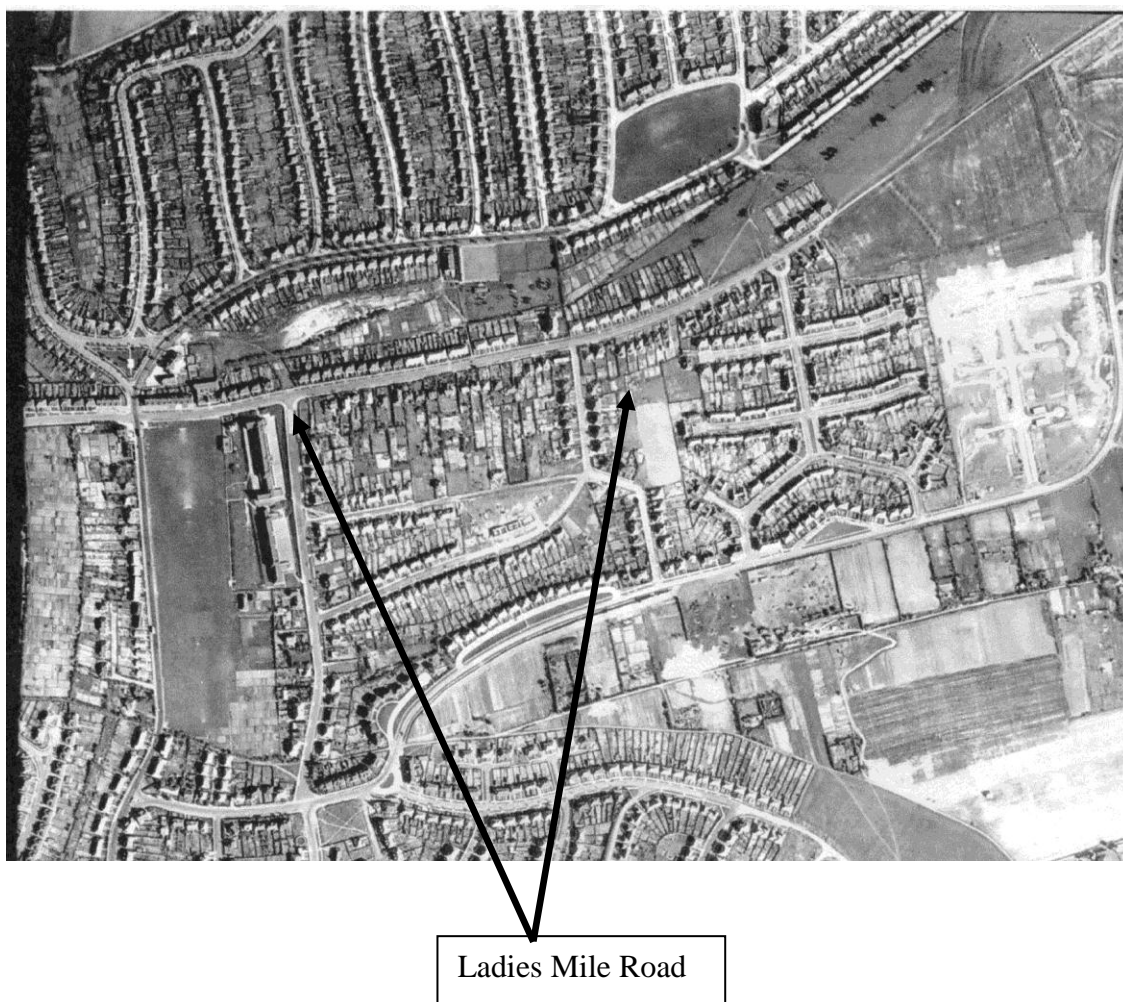
Source: ESRO

The army transit camp near Newhaven harbour was a local source of surplus huts delivered in sections. HD Davis recalled the Sweet Hill Estate, where ex-servicemen were able to assemble them with no difficulty.<sup>353</sup>

<sup>351</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p126 12.9.1922 surveyors report plans; DM/A1/1 30 1 23 p191 surveyors report plans

<sup>352</sup> ESRO SERDC DB/D/57/169/B/04

<sup>353</sup> Davis p1



Ladies Mile Road

Fig 50  
Patcham 19<sup>th</sup> April 1946  
Source: RAF aerial photo<sup>354</sup>

The individual plots that were developed along Ladies Mile Road in the early 1920s can be seen in clear contrast to the later planned mass housing scheme of the Ladies Mile Estate to the north, the Carden Avenue Estate to the east and the Dale Crescent area in the south; all of which were schemes from the early-mid 1930s. The open land south of Carden Avenue had been Paine estate land bought by Brighton Corporation in 1909 and subsequently developed as the Hollingbury council estate from 1946.

<sup>354</sup> [www.sussex.ac.uk/grc/info/airphotos-historic/indexing/index.html](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/grc/info/airphotos-historic/indexing/index.html)

The sale of Abergavenny land in July 1921 precipitated a steady flow of private housing that spread across large areas of the former agricultural land, the numbers were low for the first few years after the sale, but their impact on the open downland landscape was disproportionate to their cumulative total, with only 52 being granted permission in the period 1920-25 for the core study area and a further 53 in the peripheral area of Patcham. However limited the numbers of these ‘scattered squalor’ plotlands, they were all too visible in this area of open chalk downland, along the London Road approach to Brighton at the Bendigo estate, on the open hillside of Sweet Hill opposite, and high along the ridge of the Patcham Drove - later to be renamed Ladies Mile Road - this latter name charting its changing usage and appearance from an agricultural route way to a suburban housing ‘ribbon’. The plans for the various housing projects along the ridge give a variety of location terms for the chalky track which led eastwards to Stanmer Park. Its role as a cattle drove to Lewes market had long since been given up; during the First World War the flat hilltop to the east of the village had been used as an airfield, as recorded in the Parish Council Minutes for August 1919 -

‘A letter was read from the Town Clerk of Brighton with reference to the obstruction caused by the AVRO Company by placing a rope across the right of way on the Ladies Mile and drawn attention to by the Parish meeting. Which informed the Council that the AVRO Company stated that the ropes were placed across the Ladies Mile for the protection of the general public, but that all assistance was given to anyone desiring a passage and in some cases flying had been stopped for the time being to enable people to proceed along the Ladies Mile. That they also informed him that the rope had not been left across the Ladies Mile at night and that they would undertake that for the future they would take special care to see that the ropes were moved nightly and to give all assistance possible during the day. That the Company also stated that they had a watchman on duty by the hanger all night.’

Lest anyone was left with the idea that this airfield was part of the national defence strategy it should be noted that in the same month the *Sussex Daily News* carried an advert for -

‘AVRO joy rides, flying is now taking place on the Ladies Mile, Brighton ...flights from £1.1s...teas provided.’<sup>355</sup>

The new housing along the south side of Ladies Mile Road was in a variety of forms,

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<sup>355</sup> ESRO DB/B56/2 21.9.1919; *Sussex Daily News* 1.8.1919 p1

some of a conventional nature - 'The brick built...bungalow *Myrtle Dene*, two bedrooms...brick built garage';<sup>356</sup> many others were less conventional -

'A bungalow near Ladies Mile Road for Mr HJ Smith (converted Army Hut) ...a bungalow on Ladies Mile Road for Mr EJ Atkins (converted railway cars)... plan of a railway carriage converted into a store and scullery in Ladies Mile Road for Mr Atkins'<sup>357</sup>

The Ladies Mile Road had a greater significance in the Patcham landscape than just a chalk track, as it followed the boundary between the two large estates of Patcham, that of Patcham Place, which held the land on the north side of the road along the ridge and running down into Eastwick Bottom; and Patcham Court whose holdings lay along the south side. It was this land, Lot 4 of the 1921 sale that was experiencing the suburban sprawl. The occupants of the north facing properties had a splendid situation, looking over the Downs to the north where the recently erected Indian war memorial - The Chattri - shone white on the hill. The southern side of Ladies Mile is still noticeably different from its near neighbour across the road, the housing appearing unrelated to neighbouring plots, building lines at varying distances from plot boundaries; bungalows, two-storied detached and semi-detached houses (Fig 52). The local press noted-

'Probably 30 dwellings of the bungalow type have been erected in Ladies Mile Road and the builder is busy between this road and Carden Avenue...and both districts have been the scene of considerable building activity'<sup>358</sup>

Structures appeared throughout the interwar period in no particular order, there was no discernible plan of succession, plots were acquired as and when the owners sold up. The aerial photo in fig 51 and the map extract in fig 52 show the haphazard nature of non-planned suburban growth. The housing in Ladies Mile Road could have been the inspiration for an article by Councillor Michael Marten writing in 1923 -

'The housing problem is far from being solved and where houses are being erected they are...semi-detached, spreading over much ground at greater expense; but one prefers these under the plan, to none being built at all.'<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> *BHH* 4.1.1930 p1

<sup>357</sup> ESRO SERDC DM/A1/1 12/9/1922; 13.1.1923; ESRO DB/D57/169/B4; ESRO DB/D57/169/D

<sup>358</sup> *BG* 7.2.1925 p4

<sup>359</sup> *Brighter Brighton Guide* 21.4.1923

Electoral rolls for the period show that many people with rights to vote in Patcham by possession of land actually had residential addresses in Brighton and in many cases these addresses were in working class or lower middle class areas.

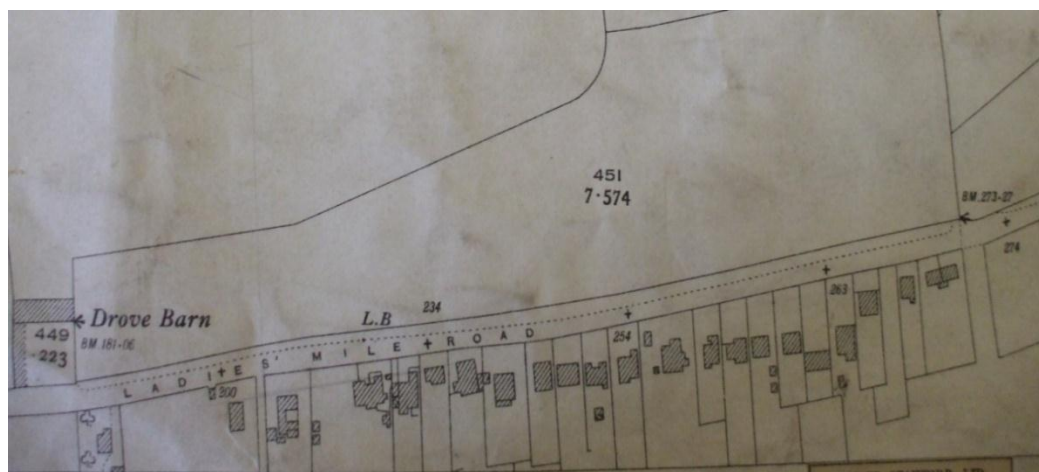


Fig 51  
Ladies Mile Road 1929  
Source: OS 6" map (section)

Landscape change, with agriculture in retreat and growing suburbia. The Drove Barn and large downland fields on the north side of Ladies Mile Road, with the south side succumbing to haphazard suburban ribbon housing.

The break-up of the Abergavenny lands in July 1921 had the curious social consequence of some of the plotlands that ensued, being purchased from the Marquis by small shopkeepers and publicans. The Patcham Electoral Roll for 1923 has in its list a general shopkeeper from Gloucester Road, in the then industrial North Laine district, a dining rooms proprietor from New England Road and his neighbour, a baker, both adjacent to the railway workshops; the most distant from the aristocratic former owners was surely HP Homan of Cheapside, at the railway coal sidings, a horse-flesh dealer.<sup>360</sup> All had right to vote as owners of land in Ladies Mile Road. It has been suggested that these 'penny capitalists' were investing savings in land as a form of insurance.

<sup>360</sup> ESRO C/C70/212; Patcham ER Spring 1923

<sup>360</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p11



## 5.7

## Carden Avenue

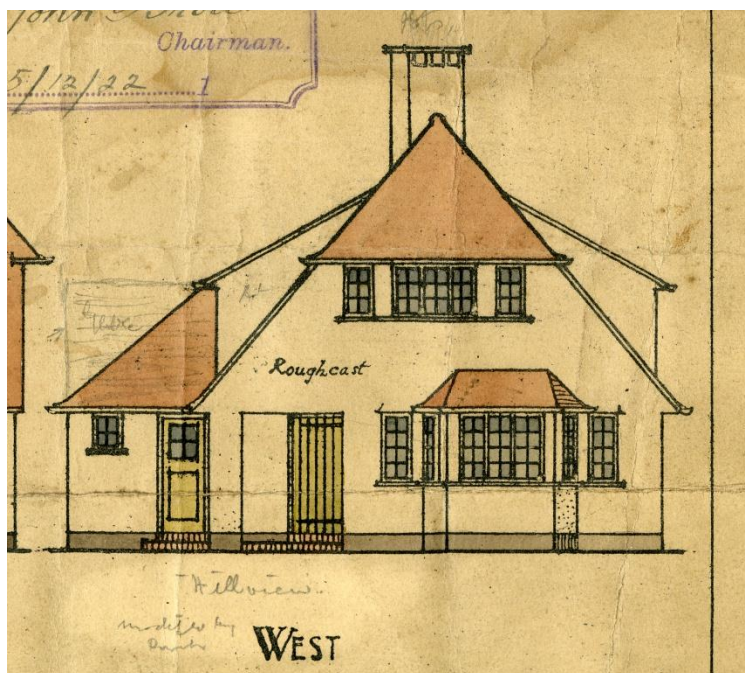


Fig 52  
 'Hillview' 40 Carden Avenue<sup>361</sup>  
 Source: ESRO

Permission granted 10.4.1923  
 (Later renamed Braeside)

Carden Avenue was constructed in stages in the early 1920s, the earliest mention is in the short formal statement in the minutes of the SERDC planning committee -

'A letter was read from the Brighton Town Council submitting plans showing the road now in course of formation from Carden Avenue, Withdean across the Small Holding land to a junction with Ditchling Road opposite Coldean Lane...' <sup>362</sup>

This was an attempt to extend the New Road that was developed around existing field boundaries in the low lying land near London Road to the hillier area of the Small Holdings that Brighton had acquired from the Paine estates in 1909.

<sup>361</sup> ESRO SERDC DB/D57/008/02

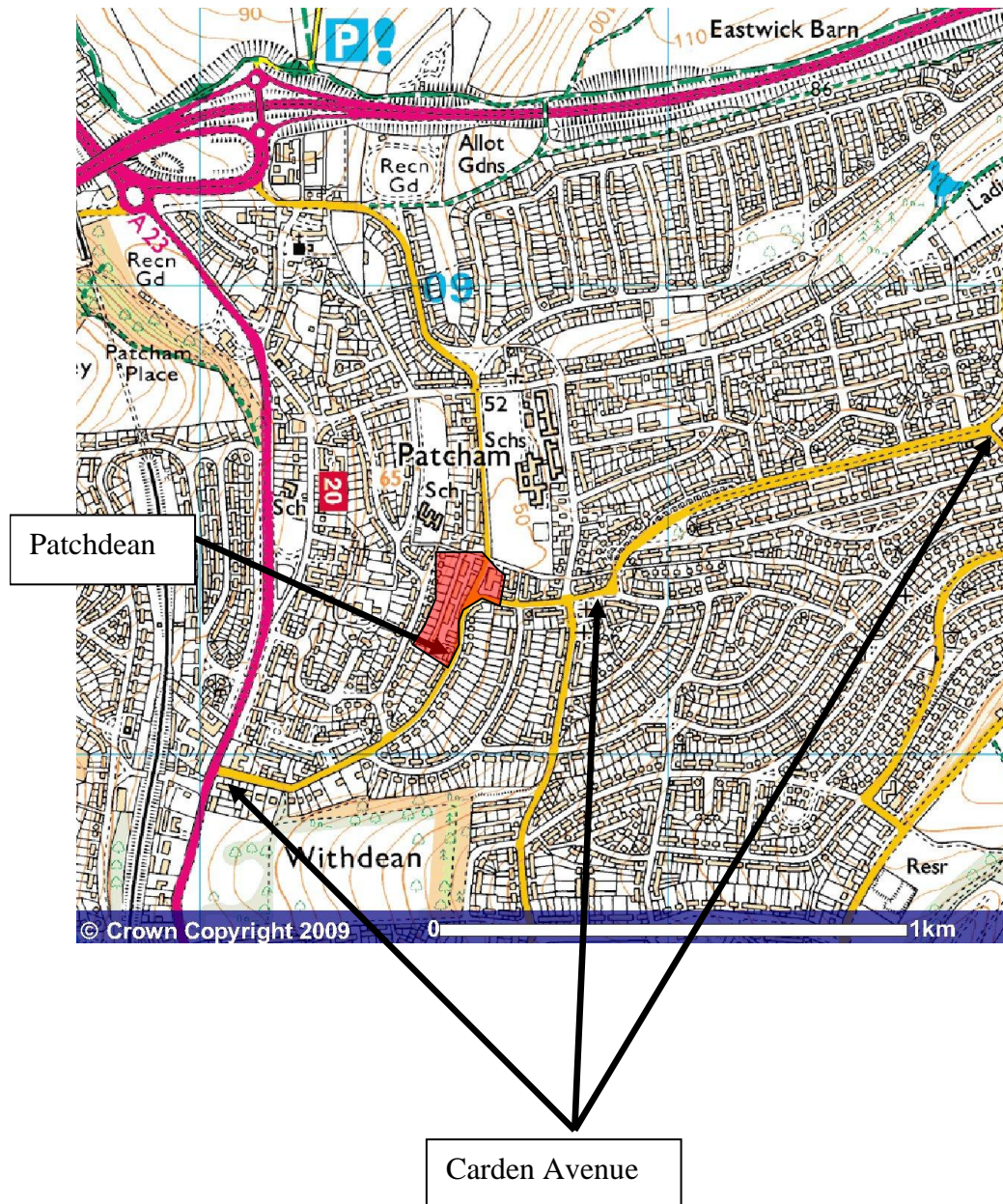


Fig 53

Carden Avenue

Source: Ordnance Survey

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The 'New Road' noted on building plans of the 1920s was developed as a series of private developments until the establishment of the Patchdean council housing in 1927. East of Patchdean the housing was more modest being the southern portion of the Dale Crescent scheme. The southern area of the eastern half became the post 1946 Hollingbury council estate.<sup>363</sup>

<sup>363</sup>ESRO AMS 3434



The housing erected early in the wake of the Abergavenny sale was in a variety of forms, from converted railway carriages to architect designed detached dwellings, but after the 1923 Act the scale and appearance of the housing took a dramatic upward turn. On the fringes of the built-up area there was still the erection of 'frontier' structures, but there was a discernible change in the size and nature of the dwellings in the developments being erected along 'The New Road' - later Carden Avenue - from its junction with the London Road eastwards along the dry valley. The house names bear witness to the rural idyll that was this attractively wooded, downland slope - *Vale Cottage*, *Woodlands*, *Lawn Cottage*, *Woodhatch*, *Hillview*, *Ashdene*, all indicating the rural aspirations of the owners of the new suburban housing, steadily eating into the copses, meadows, nursery gardens and tree belts of Patcham. Adjacent to Carden Avenue, stretching north and south along the London Road, was a skein of Victorian and Edwardian villa developments which must have been an inspiration to the architects and new aspirational suburban dwellers.



Fig 54  
Carden Avenue  
Source: Mais c1935

The ribbon nature of the development in Carden Avenue did not last long; a year after this image Graham Avenue filled the foreground, Old Mill Estate the mid-distance and Brangwyn Estate the hillside beyond the central tree belt.

This growing extension of the urban area was noted in a variety of publications, even in light-weight entertainment journals such as the *Brighter Brighton Guide*, Councillor Michael Martin in an article entitled ‘Our local unemployment question’ had observations on a variety of issues related to the housing question -

‘...the housing problem is far from being solved and where houses are being erected they are not of the terrace scheme, but semi-detached, spreading over much ground, at greater expense...to build the necessary number of houses for the needs of the local inhabitants would swallow up the largest number of the unemployed in the district ...’<sup>364</sup>

The extensive housing plots, the large detached houses and odd bungalows of the southern end of the road changed abruptly after the construction of Graham Avenue branching off south of the avenue; the housing in Carden Avenue running north from here became the province of a Hove developer ED Rowe and his Burgess Hill builder, EG Cornish, whose distinctive style was more compact and uniform than the earlier designs. The appellation - ‘Cornish Homes’ - became a selling point and these detached properties are the epitome of interwar British suburban design.



Fig 55  
 ‘Cornish Homes’. Carden Avenue  
 Source: author’s own images 19.4.2007  
 Nos 52 (originally *Igloo*) and 50 (originally *Wyvern*).  
 For EH Rowe 1928

<sup>364</sup> *Brighter Brighton Guide* 21.4.1923

There was of course opposition to these burgeoning house building schemes; as the row of ‘Cornish Homes’ was extending eastwards along Carden Avenue so the aristocracy of the county were appending their names to a joint letter to the *SCM* of June 1929 -

‘...houses to meet the increase in population must of course be built but we feel that in the circumstances the demand could be more appropriately and efficiently satisfied by proper housing schemes than by the gradual semi-sub urbanisation of some of the most beautiful country in England...we hope it is possible to prevent the erection of straggling rows of cottages along and closely frontaging the roads...’<sup>365</sup>.

The rapid growth of housing for the middle classes had a number of factors combining to create the suburb as it is later understood; Cherry in *Cities and Plans* cites -

‘An expanding middle-class able to afford their own homes coupled to low income tax, the sustained expansion of building societies, with low interest rates, an industrial shift where money was moving from manufacturing into housing, state grants to builders and local authority provision of basic services and increasingly the rising social status of owner occupation.’<sup>366</sup>

With the rapidity of house building into the 1930s the ribbon development of Carden Avenue extended ever further eastwards; the south side of the ‘New Road’ was the earlier development, as the north side was still part of the old Withdean Nursery. Construction of the Patchdean council houses along the north and west side of the road [see following section] precluded private housing there, but east of Winfield Avenue, Horace Costerton’s ‘New Road’ - there was more than one in Patcham - the private estates continued. There was a deal of contrast between the Carden Avenue housing being erected post 1930 and the earlier Ladies Mile housing just to the north; as seen on an advertisement by the Brighton estate agents Wilfred Dillistone. This ‘puff’ for housing on the Tudor Estate [fig 57], a quintessential suburban development, quite clearly shows a background of plotland ‘scattered squalor’ in Ladies Mile Road, as an unintended foil to the modern structures across the downland slope to the south. A local press advert for the estate illustrated the irony of new suburbs where the rural landscape was in full retreat -

‘The position of this unique estate will appeal to lovers of the open country...’<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> *Sussex County Magazine* (1929) v3 n6 p504

<sup>366</sup> Cherry (1988) p93

<sup>367</sup> *BHH* 21.3 1931 p1



Fig 56  
The Tudor Estate, Carden Avenue.  
Source: Dillistone advertising image 1931

*'Tudor Villa Estate, Carden Avenue, Withdean, adjoining Warmdene Road, ideal 3 bedroom residences of entirely unique design, reminiscent of Tudor architecture. £850 freehold or £50 deposit, 27/- per week.'*<sup>368</sup>

This view north also shows the plotlands lying south of Ladies Mile Road, visible in the background to the right of the building.

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<sup>368</sup> BHH 3.1 1931 p1



## Patchdean

*'The Council used [Sweet Hill] till they built Patchdean...with three or four other families we all moved down to Patchdean, right opposite the shops'*<sup>369</sup>



Fig 57

Patchdean 1972; looking north along Carden Avenue  
Source; Brighton History Centre, Brighton Museum

The 1927 subsidy housing [now demolished] erected by SERDC and used initially to rehouse Sweet Hill families; a stylistic and social contrast to the private housing nearby (figs 53 and 57). The new council properties drew harsh criticism from the existing middle-class neighbours in their private dwellings.

Burnett in '*A social history of housing*' noted that -

'The housing emergency of 1918 was, in fact, made up of a number of distinct causes...in the years immediately before 1914 there had been a serious slackening in the rate of house-building which was already threatening to produce a critical shortage of accommodation ...'<sup>370</sup>

In spite of the limited government measures to ease the situation -

'...the shortage of accommodation was greater than it had been in 1919 ... the lack of government interference in the two years since July 1921 had failed to

<sup>369</sup> Mrs Blacklock pers.comm. 26.10.2005

<sup>370</sup> Burnett J (1978) *A social history of housing 1815-1970* p 216-7

result in the construction of a decent number of unsubsidised housing by private enterprise.’<sup>371</sup>

The SERDC had added problems with the need to re-house the former settlers of Sweet Hill, plus a county council report on the sub-standard housing in the parish. An earlier list showing the three lowest tenders submitted for the building of council houses in Carden Avenue, Patcham starts on page one of the SERDC 1921 Minutes; these were forwarded to the Housing Commissioners. A month later the next meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> August was considering a letter from the Ministry of Health [which at that time was the government department responsible for state housing policy] this was on the question of -

‘...limiting housing schemes to the number of houses built, building, or for what tenders have been approved’<sup>372</sup>

It was concluded from this that their Carden Avenue housing scheme would have to be abandoned, as tenders had gone out, but had not been approved. The background to this decision by central government was one of high political drama; the 1919 Housing Act (the Addison Act) granted subsidies for local bodies to provide housing in a period of very high building costs. It has been estimated that over 400,000 houses were needed to replace those declared unfit and to reduce the chronic overcrowding of the urban areas.

‘[In] 1920-21 unemployment across the country increased to 18%, profits and production fell ... the Addison programme was reduced with overall sharp reductions in direct housing expenditure and a general...cost-cutting.’<sup>373</sup>

The post-war financial crisis meant a reduction of the subsidy in 1921 and this decision by the Cabinet caused Addison to resign in July 1921; the ‘Geddes Axe’ of February 1922 removed the subsidy completely. This is where the single remaining Minute book is so tantalising, as there is no record now of the discussion, in what must have been the previous volume, of the decision-making process that led to the finding of the site and the provision of infrastructure to support the housing scheme. The Patcham Parish Council (PPC) Minute book survives for the period, overlapping the SERDC Minutes by several years, and although concerned with strictly parochial affairs, the wider world of SERDC

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<sup>371</sup> Orbach LF (1977) *Homes for heroes: a study of the evolution of British public housing 1915-1921* p139

<sup>372</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p8

<sup>373</sup> Merrett S and Gray F (1982) *Owner occupation in Britain* p36

impinges at several points. The need to provide housing for those living in dwellings declared 'unfit' caused a storm both in the PPC and the SERDC after the receipt of a circular letter from ESCC on 29th May 1919; this is too early to be found in the single SERDC volume, but the row which ensued from the SERDC meeting reached the columns of the *Sussex Daily News* in January 1920, a fact noted in the PPC Minutes. Forty new homes were planned by SERDC to be grouped around a 'Village Green', these were to replace the 27 houses identified by the Medical Officer of Health as 'unfit for occupation'; as none of the Parish Councillors could think where the 'unfit' homes were located this caused a major row. SERDC officials were not allowed to name the properties as this would legally have declared them as '*Condemned*' and the families occupying them would lose their homes immediately, serious for the families, as the bulk were rented and they had no housing legislation to protect them. '*Unfit*' gave local authorities the power to improve the properties, but this was not popular, as the costs could be high but with little actual improvement for the occupiers.<sup>374</sup> Not only were there disagreements on the numbers and the actual need for new housing but also on the site chosen, the Minutes refer to the site and a map, [now missing] and three parish Councillors visited it, but alas sadly no indication is given to its location, other than -

'...the site divides into two parts, a farm at present occupied on lease, and as the detached portion contains the barn and farm buildings, the farm is rendered useless as a dairy farm.'<sup>375</sup>

There is the possibility that the site is that of Elms Farm, [now The Elms shopping parade] a small dairy enterprise located close to the junction of Ladies Mile Road and the London Road. Paradoxically, while the preferred SERDC site cannot be identified precisely, the alternatives presented by the PPC were given geographical locations -

'...the land abutting on both sides of the main road beyond the old toll house, would offer better facilities for the erection of the Model Village. Probably the cost of the land would be much less than in the previous case as another alternative, suitable sites for houses might be found in Carden Avenue; on the Ladies Mile Road; near the Pumping Station, and elsewhere. By this means sufficient and convenient housing accommodation might be secured to meet the actual demands of the parish...at a vastly less cost.'<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p8; ESRO DB/B56/2 p151-152; ESRO AMS 6438/49; *Sussex Daily News* 7. 1. 1920 p8 c.3; ESRO DB/B56/2 p146-7

<sup>375</sup> ESRO SERDC DB/B56/2 p152

<sup>376</sup> ESRO SERDC DB/B56/2 p152



The rejection of this project rumbled on for the following two years with queries arising as to who would pay - and what would be paid - to the various officials involved in the initial stages of the Carden Avenue housing scheme.

With the abandonment of the Patcham housing scheme, there appears in the 1921 Minutes the name of HC Costerton, a man who would come to be a major player in the early housing developments around the parish. He was enquiring about the possibility of building a road across the site to open up the land he had bought recently at the auction, land which lay in a large block to the south of Ladies Mile Road, he was also enquiring about buying a portion of the abandoned site for his own development. No decision was taken on this, and later events seem to confirm SERDC did indeed hold on to the land. Without knowing the exact site it is impossible to be definite about this road, however a later SERDC housing site in 1927 was located on the bend of Carden Avenue at Patchdean - still a Local Authority housing site; if this is the 1921 location then the 'new road' is Winfield Avenue where Costerton did indeed develop a number of properties.<sup>377</sup> The idea of 'council houses' set amidst the growing area of middle-class suburban housing in Carden Avenue was not received well, as witness a pencil note in the files of SERDC dated February 1926 -

'Mr Midgely from (Woodhatch) Carden Ave called and wanted to lay a protest with respect to proposed Council Houses at Patcham, as it would ruin the amenity of Carden Avenue. Told him he had better write [to] the Clerk.'<sup>378</sup>

Later a note appears from London solicitors, Lawrence, Graham and Co. Lincolns Inn -

'I have heard from Tozer this morning that your Council are going to build three blocks of four cottages each on the land in Carden Avenue purchased from this Estate and I am therefore writing to ask you to see... that the cottages are of a character and design as not to be offensive or detrimental to this Estate or the owners and occupiers of the houses already in Carden Avenue'<sup>379</sup>

In a reply to the above the SERDC stated -

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<sup>377</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p16; ESRO DB/B/56/11

<sup>378</sup> ESRO BBC DB/B57/10 24.2.1926

<sup>379</sup> ESRO BBC DB/B57/10 2.3.1926

‘...The council have not yet decided to erect the cottages but if they do so they must necessarily be small but they will not be at all offensive in design and in fact we shall try to make them as picturesque as possible. Several objections have been made to the erection of the cottages in this locality but considering the type of erection which has been put up on the adjoining land by Mr Costerton I do not think these cottages will affect the amenity of the neighbourhood....’<sup>380</sup>

Thus taking a thinly veiled swipe at Horace Costerton’s building empire. A view shared by the travel writer, broadcaster and Sussex resident, SPB Mais -

‘The vested interests who build and invest in building are much more powerful than those who merely wish to preserve beauty. To build brings in money, to preserve a green pleasance costs money...people save up all their lives in order to retire to Sussex where they hope to be free to roam in a green land, only to find, when they get there, that the land is no longer green and that they are merely changing a suburb near London for a less convenient suburb further away from it.’<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 p11.

<sup>381</sup> Mais (in Williams Ellis 1938) p218

## 5.9

## Warmdene Road and Winfield Avenue

*'Private enterprise led to great suburban developments and the erection of small and medium sizes houses. The town worker became more and more used to reckoning distance in time instead of miles which is shown in some instances by the rapid increase in population of certain seaside resorts such as Brighton, Southend-on-Sea and Blackpool'*<sup>382</sup>

Howkins 1938

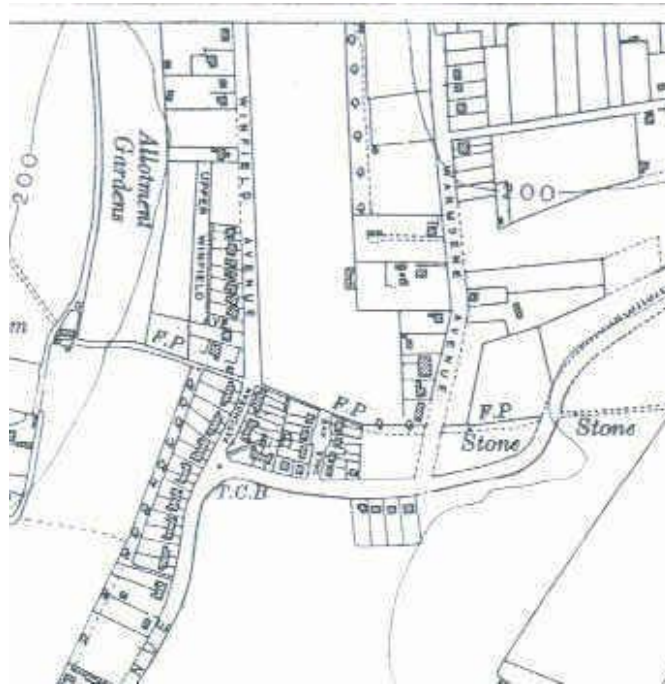


Fig 58

Winfield Avenue, Warmdene Avenue and Carden Avenue, Patcham 1931

Source: OS 6" 1931

The cartographic evidence of interwar suburban growth. A classic example of private sector ribbon development in the winding Carden Avenue, local authority dwellings at Patchdean[mid-picture] with earlier plotland development in Warmdene and Winfield Avenues The long tree line running south from Upper Winfield Avenue and to the west of Carden Avenue is a survivor from an earlier period, being recorded in the Patcham Tithe Survey 1842. It still remains in the landscape. (Warmdene Avenue alternates in the records with Warmdene Road as the road name.)

<sup>382</sup> Howkins F (1938) *Development of private estates* p7

## Warmdene Road

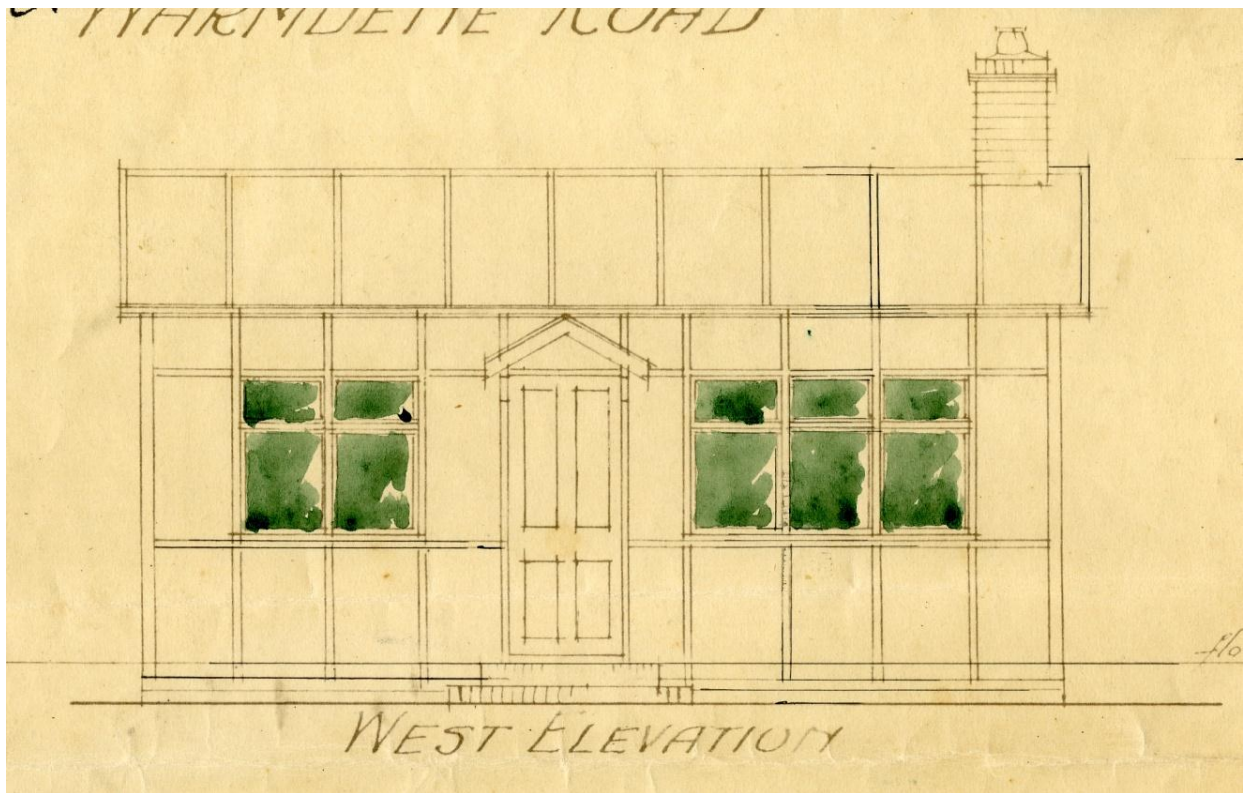


Fig 59  
'Ower Cottage' 22 Warmdene Road  
Source ESRO

*'November 1924, proposed timber framed and asbestos sheet bungalow  
for Mr. Sharpe, 52ft x 128ft'* <sup>383</sup>

<sup>383</sup> ESRO DB/D57/ 506/A/ 02



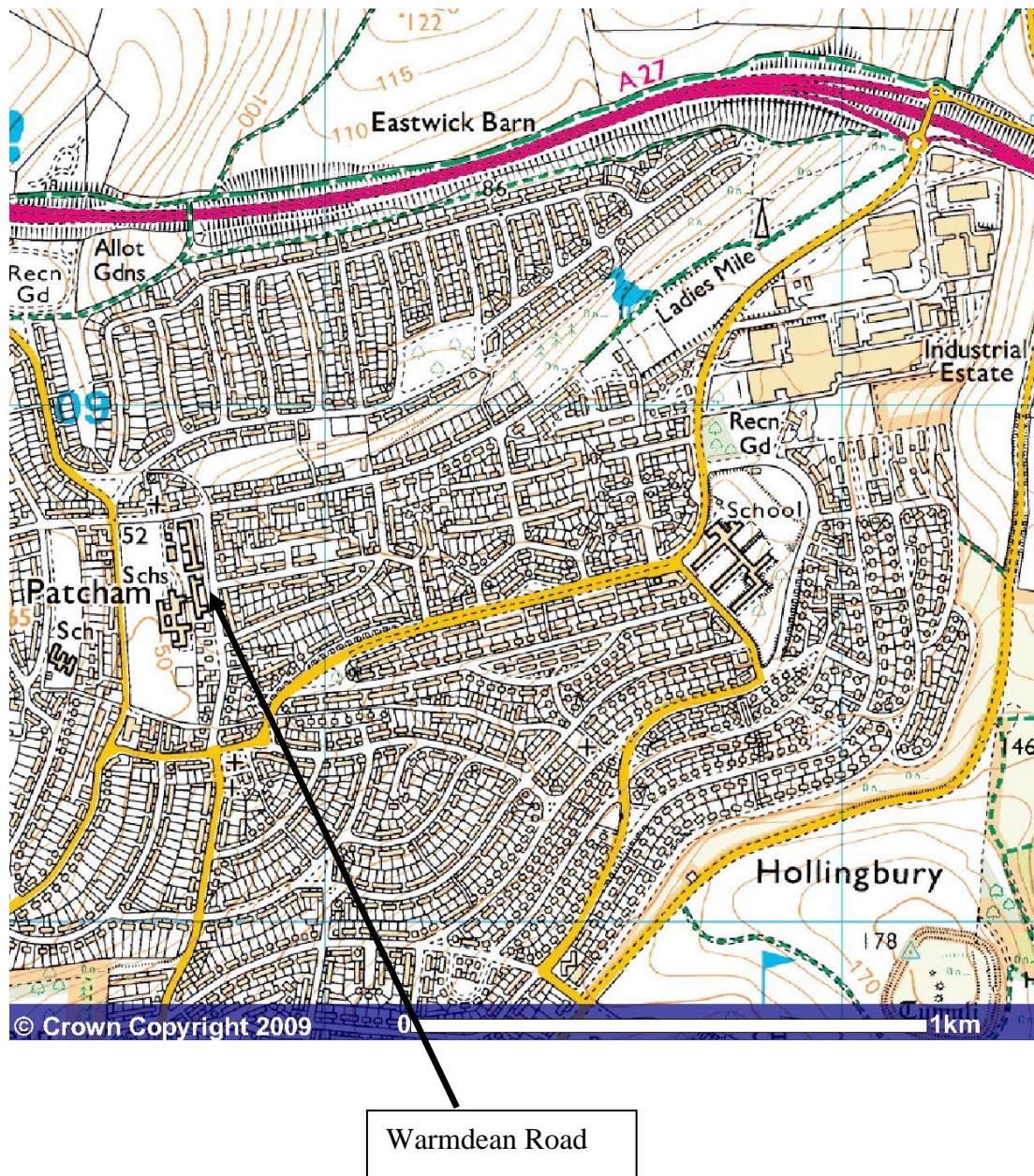


Fig 60  
Warmdean Road

Source: Ordnance Survey

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The name of this thoroughfare changed throughout the interwar from Vale Road (one of two in the parish) to Warmdean Avenue to Warmdean Road and also in its spelling, often appearing as Warmdene. Its name originates from the field name shown on the 1750 Abergavenny map and 1842 Tithe map as '*Worms dene laine*'.

Sheail noted as the process of 'The Urban Attack' that -

'The physical demands being made on the countryside and coast arose from profound changes taking place in the economic and social outlook of an essentially stable population...the countryside was under attack from the towns, and rural life was disintegrating from within...there was a growing desire to escape from 'the respectable rows of suburban houses built under the sanitary bye-laws' of the Victorian and Edwardian periods for a new, more rural, environment',<sup>384</sup>

This had its echo locally, as until 1930 the majority of housing in Patcham was in the form earlier noted, of single or small groups of dwellings, and their spread was either as the oft-denounced ribbon development, the plotland estate or the more respectable detached dwelling. Sheail's second category of rural change, that of 'Rural Disintegration' was clearly emphasised in his quoting the words of Lord Phillimore -

'[He] distinguished four strands in the townsman's perception of the countryside. First, rural areas were required for accommodating such urban prerequisites as sewage farms and refuse tips. Secondly, the countryside provided sites for golf courses and playing fields, and thirdly areas for new housing developments. The fourth claim was less well defined, but no less important. Because so few people actually worked in the countryside and their contribution to national wealth appeared to be so small there was a tendency to look upon rural areas as a vast park or pleasure ground.'<sup>385</sup>

Many of the early developments within the study area come under the Sheail definition, in Patcham the sewage farms were absent but the land was used as water catchment for the neighbouring borough of Brighton and this was a factor in the absorption of the parish into the borough in 1927. Adjacent to Patchdean and sandwiched between Winfield and Warmdene Avenues was the valley bottom that did service as the sports ground for the big Brighton electrical engineering firm Allen West, and housing of course was a rapidly expanding component of the urban fringe. There was an extra element in the Patcham landscape that was not noted by Sheail and that was the use of the urban fringe as smallholdings. A large area at the eastern end of Carden Avenue was given over to 'The Small Holdings' and they crop up with regularity as a geographical fixed point in relation

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<sup>384</sup> Sheail (1981) p10-11

<sup>385</sup> Sheail (1981) p21

to the new developments. These remained into the post-World War Two world when they were eventually subsumed in the construction of the Hollingbury council estate. The land south of Ladies Mile Road was a microcosm of the national picture as it rapidly assumed the character of a classic urban fringe. Land formerly held of a big landed estate, sold as a result of the downturn in agricultural land values, broken into plots with individual owners developing housing in a multiplicity of sizes and styles. The lifecycle of the suburb, a process that was being repeated throughout interwar Britain. Warmdene Avenue [latterly Road] has a long etymological background; the earliest detailed map of the area is the Abergavenny map of 1750 that shows the land as ‘Worms Dean’<sup>386</sup> presumably not a name considered appealing to 20<sup>th</sup> century new suburbanites. A contemporary interwar volume ‘*Development of private building estates*’ has a revealing passage on this very item -

‘*The naming of the Estate and Roads*-Attractive names will prove very helpful in disposing of both land and houses. It is a pardonable weakness that people would rather live in The Avenue on the Russell estate than in Wembley Street on the Station Estate...names which convey a pleasant suggestion either as to aspect such as Sunnyside or to sylvan beauty, as Elms Avenue, or to height, such as Hill Rise are to be preferred to others.’<sup>387</sup>

Winfield is of unknown origin and in 1750 was part of the adjacent estate of a smaller owner Mr Scrase, although acquired by the Abergavennys before 1811; there is no comparable detailed map naming the land it ran over. Both the avenues in this section show the main characteristics of the early interwar, with Warmdene Avenue housing appearing a few years earlier, although the number of undated permissions in Winfield Avenue may invalidate this. The earlier Warmdene structures still appear less substantial than their near neighbours across the playing fields, having the appearance of ‘frontier’ style dwellings, with accompanying occupations (figs 60 and 62). By the mid-1930s, although there had been an increase in the number of houses in the road, there was still the urban fringe character to it, with a boarding kennels for cats and dogs run by Miss Haigh at the rear of her father’s property, appropriately named ‘The Wylde’. Plans show this house with another plot at the rear containing a structure, presumably the kennels.<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> ESRO ABER 32a

<sup>387</sup> Howkins (1938) p249

<sup>388</sup> *Kellys Directory* 1934 p1073; ESRO DB/D57/506A/4



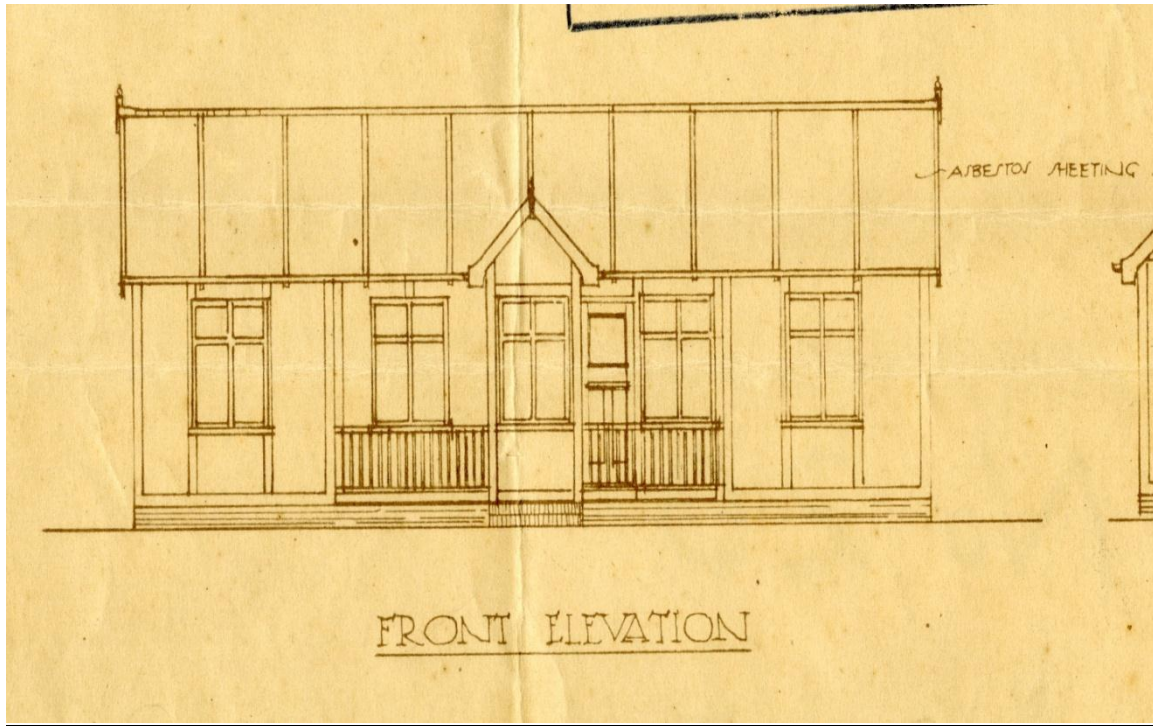


Fig 61  
 'The Wylde'. 20 Warmdene Road<sup>389</sup>  
 Source: ESRO.

*'July 1925 The Wylde for Mr. Haigh,  
 front plot 55ft x 130ft links to back plot 130ft x 77ft'*

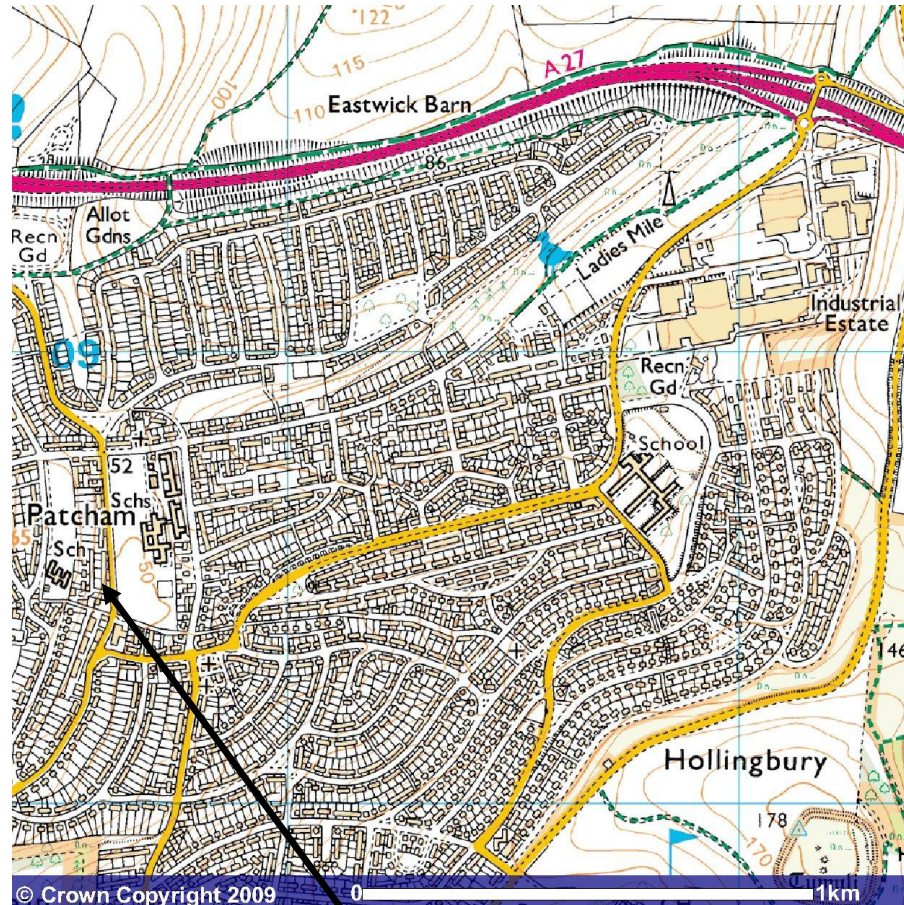
Warmdene Road along with many of the new roads in suburbia, garnered a host of personalised house names, some familiar and comforting - *Rob Roy, The Elders, Sunnyside, The Bungalow, Ower Cottage, Kosy Cot, The Nest*; some more obscure - *Jibberding, The Wylde, Mayetta*.

Lewis, in an unpublished paper has outlined a series of categories for these in relation to an interwar housing area in Goring on the West Sussex coast; nearer to Patcham, Coates has done similar work on the eastern Brighton suburbs of Rottingdean and Ovingdean.<sup>390</sup>

<sup>389</sup> DB/D57/506/A/04

<sup>390</sup> Lewis C (2008) *The meaning of house names in Sussex* unpub.ms; Coates R (2010) *A place name history of Rottingdean and Ovingdean*

## Winfield Avenue



Winfield Avenue

Fig 62  
Winfield Avenue

Source: Ordnance Survey

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Developed in a wide range of interwar styles, Winfield Avenue fits Osbert Lancaster's satirical label as - 'By-pass variegated' (fig 117).





Fig 63  
Nos 8-9 Winfield Avenue, Patcham  
Source: author's own image

*'Composition roofing materials, roughcast, stained boards and cold grey cement...instead of growing mellow, they merely get shabby.'*<sup>391</sup>

In the main local campaigning organ, the *Sussex County Magazine*, from volume one, number one, in December 1926, the tone was set with an article by W.E.Palmer -

'Ruining Rural Sussex: Monstrosities of the Countryside' - 'The whole question of this spoliation of the countryside resolves itself into indiscriminate and thoughtless development'<sup>392</sup>

Palmer wrote a blistering account of the 'jerry-built' structures with their fake antiquity, shoddy workmanship and general 'cheap-jack' air that were despoiling not just the urban fringes but the deep countryside, now more than ever accessible by improved roads, cheap motor cars and extended bus services. The reality of suburban living was far removed from the expectations of the inhabitants, often based on the blandishments of the developers' purple prose. If Winfield Avenue is indeed the New Road referred to in the

<sup>391</sup> Palmer AE (1926) Ruining rural Sussex: monstrosities of the countryside *SCM* v1n1 p81

<sup>392</sup> Palmer p81

Patcham Council Minutes it was to become the shop window for a multiplicity of housing styles, ranging from a mini-estate of distinctive single-storied dwellings, through typical plotland bungalows, to fake half-timbered semis and Voysey-style detached villas.

Before 1930 the developments in Patcham were very much those of small builders and individual developers, there was little attempt at an integrated plan, either in respect to the overall picture or even to neighbouring properties, there was a paucity of essential services, nothing in the way of local shops other than the existing enterprises far away in the old village; this was a scene that was repeated across the country, and Fry writing of a contemporary Warwickshire scheme paints a similar picture.<sup>393</sup> Local transport provision to and from Brighton was limited in the extent and numbers of bus services -

‘Application by Mr CW Bromley for licences for two motor omnibuses to ply between the Aquarium and Patcham (refused)’<sup>394</sup>

There was no convenient railway service - though a Patcham station had been talked of since at least 1907.<sup>395</sup> According to Whitehand and Carr -

‘...the stimulus to the accelerated change that led to the distinctness of the forms that characterised the second half of the 1920s and 1930s had a number of facets. Of those directly concerned with the building industry, the hiatus in house building directly before, during and immediately following the First World war inevitably meant that many of the firms that had been building in the Edwardian period had ceased to exist by the 1920s and that, when conditions more congenial to house-building eventually returned, new firms and organisations with less adherence to pre-war practices were formed.’<sup>396</sup>

After 1930 the picture was to change with the advent into the parish of major construction firms, the scene was set for a dramatic shift in the scale and design of domestic housing and the associated social provision. The individual dwellings and small builder operations that characterised the immediate post-war period with their piecemeal developments were to change with the advent of major players in the housing market.

Burnett in *A social history of housing* commented -

‘Between the wars private building made a remarkably effort to meet the housing

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<sup>393</sup> Fry p139 passim

<sup>394</sup> *BHH* 28.3.1925 p1

<sup>395</sup> *BHH* 5.10.1907 p5

<sup>396</sup> Whitehand JWR and Carr C (1999b) England’s interwar suburban landscapes; myth and reality *Journal of historical geography* v25n4 p247

demands ... extending the possibility of home-ownership well down into the lower middle classes and even into the upper levels of the working classes.<sup>397</sup>



*'Hatherley'* no 46 Warmdean Road



*'Coogee'* no 20 Winfield Avenue  
(Now *'The Boathouse'*)

Fig 64

Pre-1930 housing contrasts.

Source: author's own images 21.1.2006 / 7.2.2004

Facing one another across the playing fields, these two properties of 1926 show, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, their differing social origins and epitomise the variation in building activity at the time. *'Hatherley'* has the cottage 'settler' look, while *'Coogee'* has the bold, architect inspired ideals of CFA Voysey.

In the period leading up to 1930 the suburban growth evidenced in Patcham illustrated all the major themes outlined earlier in this thesis; the continuity of landscape features, both the physical characteristics of the chalk and the human element of downland agriculture is clear, as is the change that came with the housing growth post First World War. The differential pattern of landownership ensured a degree of diversity in subsequent developments. The sequence of farmland, new housing, seasoned housing, and redeveloped housing gave a lifecycle to the phenomena. The passage of time and reflective observation allows for a degree of perspective to be gained in recording the suburb, revealing far more than is usually acknowledged in suburban histories.

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<sup>397</sup> Burnett p245

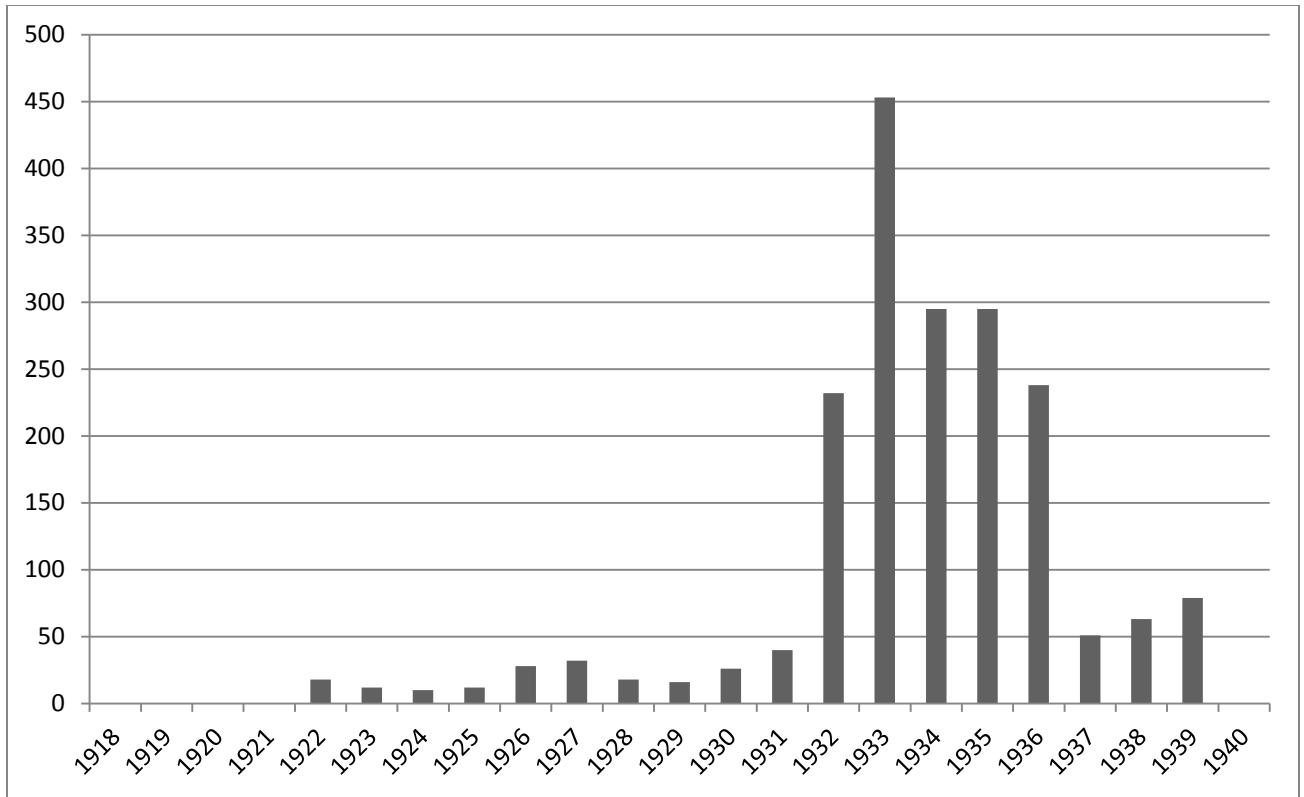


Table 4  
 Numbers of permissions to build. Patcham core area.<sup>398</sup>  
 Source: Brighton and Hove Council building control  
 (Figs 2 and 3 show the area of the core.)

This change will now be examined in the context of Patcham. As can be seen Table 4 the annual house building figures for the core area of Patcham in the first postwar decade are relatively small and are in stark contrast to the years after 1931 when the large corporate building firms are operating throughout the area. In just four years 93% of all the houses built in the interwar period in the core were constructed. Throughout the UK this period was the peak of housing construction.

<sup>398</sup> BHBC card index

## Chapter 6

'The all-electric home' - a landscape of corporate modernity



Fig 65  
Ladies Mile Estate brochure c1932  
Source Brian Tulley collection

*'A commendable enterprise of benefit to home seekers...'*<sup>399</sup>

<sup>399</sup> Howkins F p7



The decade following the end of the First World War was one of a housing free-for-all, with the urban fringe mixture of army huts, railway carriages and old tram car bodies, interspersed with architect designed detached dwellings and speculative bungalows; the advent of the 1930s saw a dramatic change in the numbers, scale and rate of growth of the new housing developments, an aspect that this chapter addresses. As the 1930s progressed, the appearance of the urban fringes of most British urban areas - and many rural ones - changed dramatically. The key themes of this thesis, noted earlier in response to 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century urban growth were as apparent, but in different emphases, in the second phase of suburban growth during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Continuity and change could be readily discerned as former agricultural holdings were sold for housing development, the fields and meadows filling with variations of plotlands, bungalows and detached dwellings; albeit the roads and housing schemes often taking on the names of the fields they now over-ran. As different owners sold off land at different times and as a range of small developers and private individuals erected the housing so a diverse array of structures appeared. The farmland and early suburban housing absorbed the later schemes, new administrative controls and legislation changed things still further; all part of a lifecycle within the suburb. Making the observation of this housing evolution gives perspective to the longer term and wider picture.

Glynn and Oxborrow outlined the contributory factors to the high rate of building in the 1930s as a situation of demand; a rise in real incomes, an increase in the effective area for building made available by the development of motor transport and suburban - usually electric - railways and the relaxing of physical constraints; the development of building societies and the publicity they instigated in favour of home ownership (assets rising 650% 1923-38), along with the changing structure of the working population, a rise in white collar and a fall in manual workers. Niner and Watson similarly noted that -

‘...the growth in owner-occupation [was] paralleled by the development of the building society movement and aided by the stimulation of effective demand through income tax relief on mortgage interest payments, to those borrowing money for house purchase.’<sup>400</sup>

There were also factors of supply, land from a depressed agricultural sector, low prices of building materials especially in the early 1930s, low interest rates and the fall of house prices in terms of average wages. Howkins (1938) contemporaneously notes -

‘The development of private estates is not only dependent upon the demand for

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<sup>400</sup> Niner P and Watson CJ (1978) *Housing in British cities* p323

houses, but a capacity to pay for the same either by purchase or by renting at an economic figure. Assuming that a man's income determines the kind of house he lives in, the total demand for houses of certain kinds will be in proportion to those who can afford to live in them.'<sup>401</sup>

Following on from these general economic factors, Merrett and Gray state -

'...house-building for owner-occupation and local authority rental became the dominant forms of production...state policies directly affected house ownership sector in a variety of ways...intervention (was) fairly minimal with respect to land and planning...the role of the state in the field of mortgage finance primarily consisted in setting legal framework within which building societies operated.'<sup>402</sup>

The scale and increase of house building in the interwar period (Table 5) is all the more remarkable when compared to the decline in housing numbers in the pre-war era.

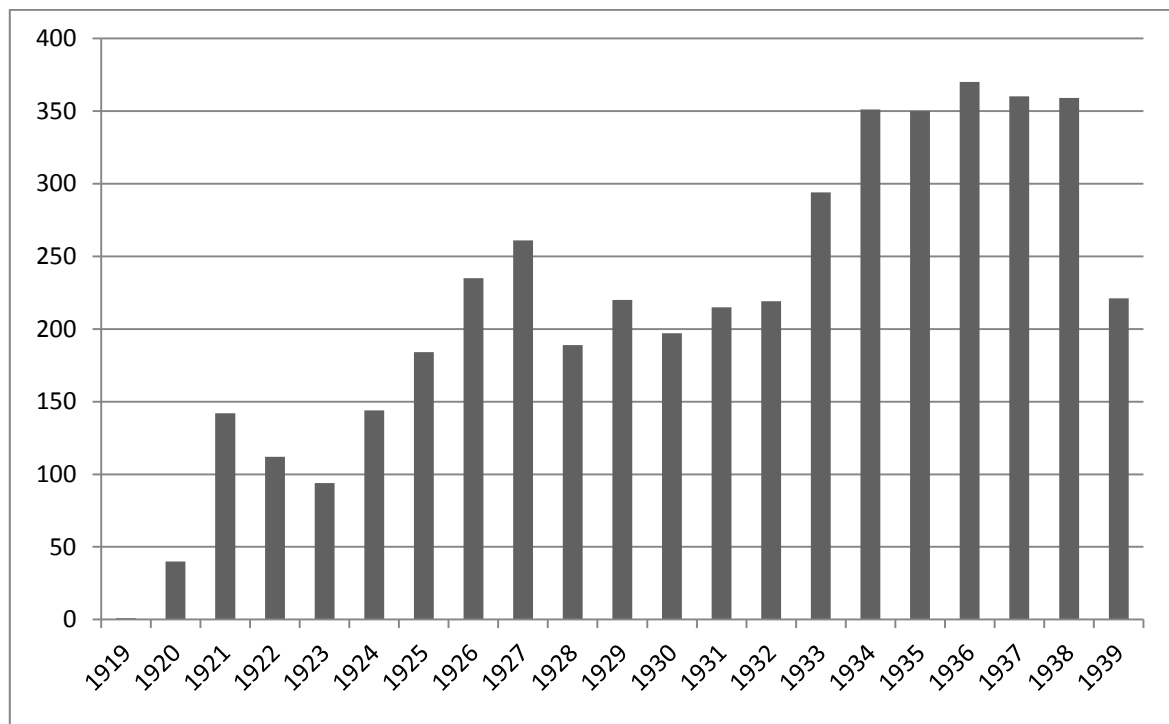


Table 5  
Great Britain, private and local authority housing numbers, permanent dwellings completed, thousands

Source: after Butler and Butler<sup>403</sup>

The national distribution is at variance to the Patcham situation where there is very little local authority housing; the bulk of which was being erected under the Labour administrations in the period before the 1933 Housing Act.

<sup>401</sup> Glynn B and Oxborrow J (1976) *Interwar Britain* p229; Howkins (1938) p7

<sup>402</sup> Merrett and Gray p1

<sup>403</sup> Butler D and Butler D (1985) *Twentieth century British political facts 1900-1985* p332

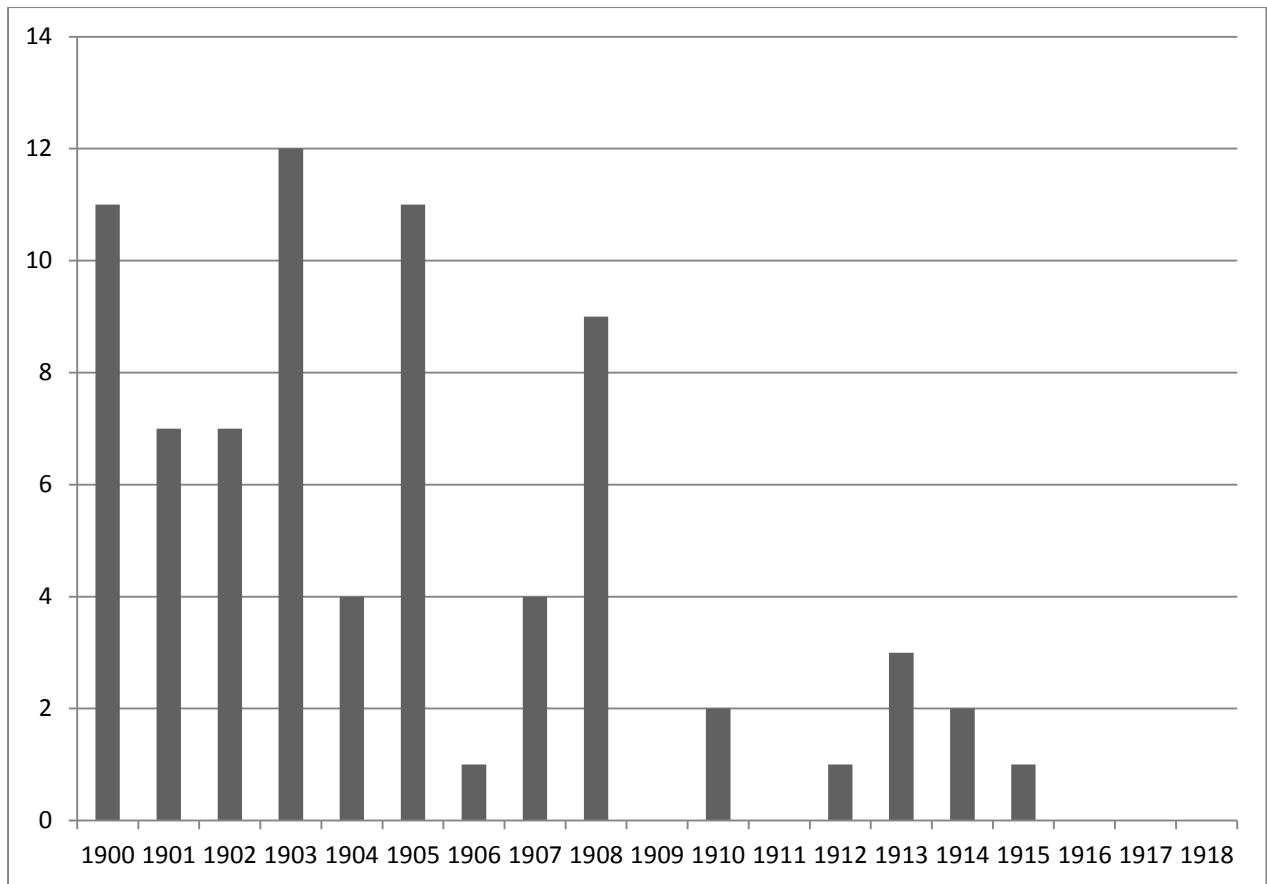


Table 6

Patcham area (periphery) housing permissions granted, pre-First World War

Source: Brighton and Hove Building Control data

(Fig 2 shows the area of the periphery.)

The decline in house-building in the outer Patcham area pre-First World War; the table records the incipient suburban ribbons extending from Brighton borough into the parish, along the London Road valley and Dyke Road ridge. By 1914 the numbers of houses built across the UK had dropped to 50% of the 1900 figure, more than reflected in these Patcham figures. In a local context the pattern of building for Brighton borough closely followed this pattern (Table 3).

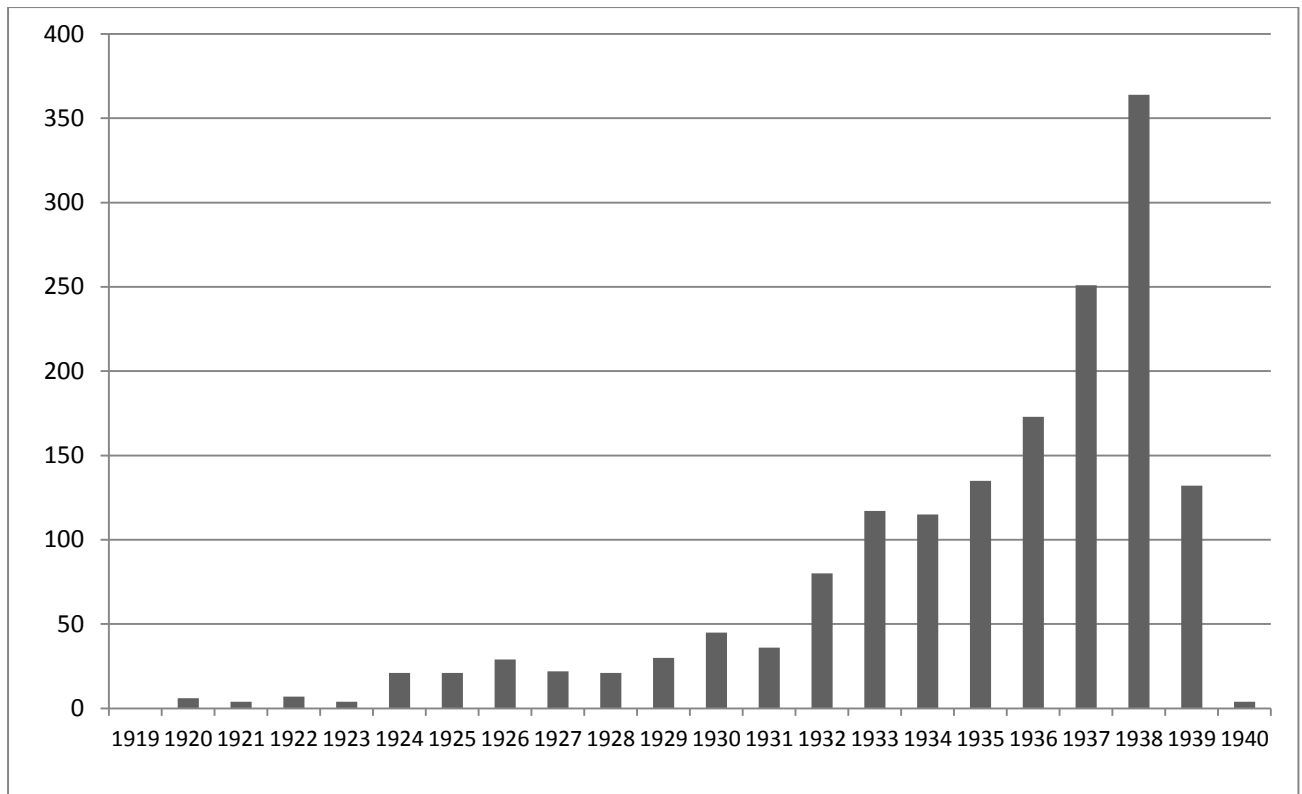


Table 7  
Patcham area (periphery) housing permissions granted.  
Interwar housing numbers.  
Source: Brighton and Hove Building Control data  
(Fig 2 shows the area of the periphery.)

The trickle of post-war housing in the outer areas of Patcham rapidly increased after 1931 as corporate builders moved into the area. The peak of house building came later than in the core area reflecting the availability of building land away from the core. The dramatic fall in numbers after 1938 is partly explained by the saturation of the housing market with cheap housing, but also by the economy changing from house-building to manufacturing as industry moved to a war footing.

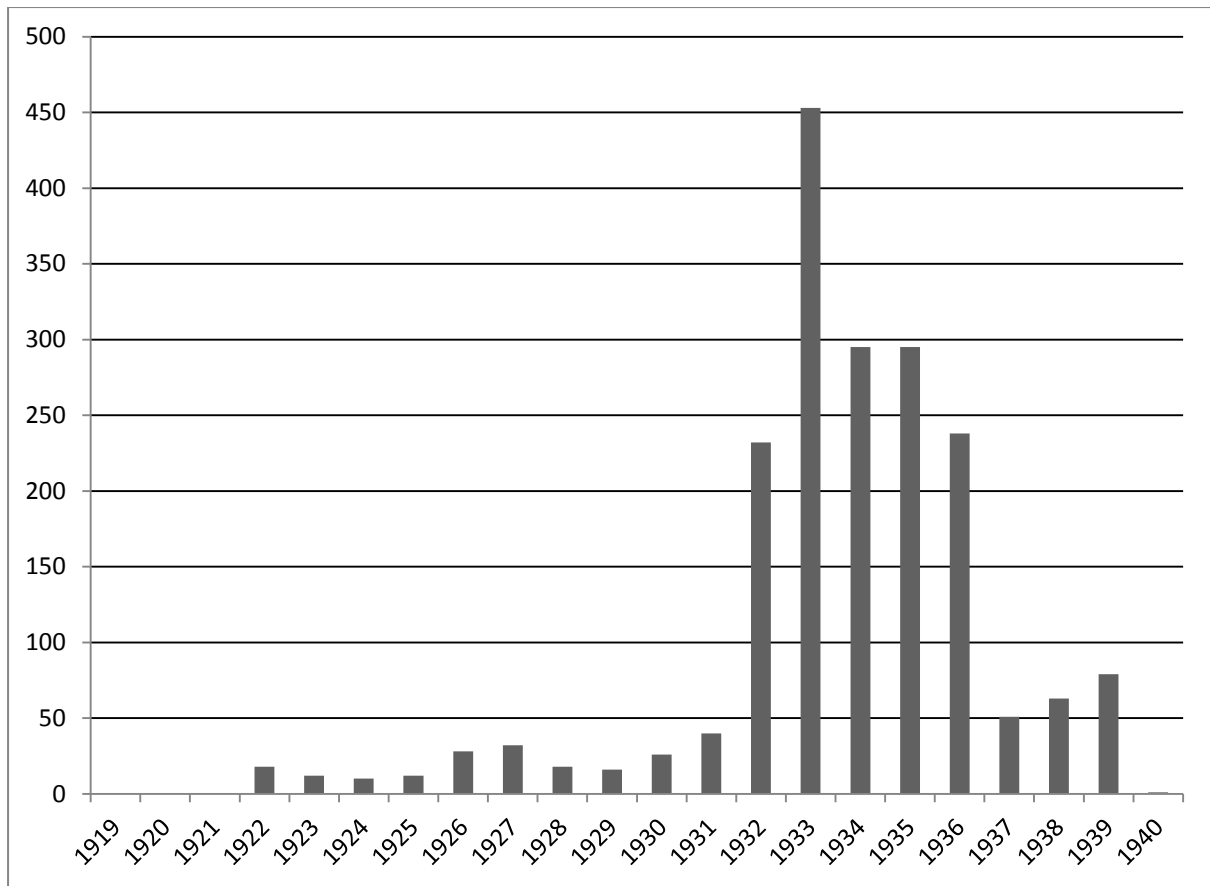


Table 8  
Patcham core area, housing permissions granted  
Source: Brighton and Hove Council Building Control data  
(Figs 2 and 3 show the area of the periphery.)

In Patcham's core area the low rate of house building delineated here came after the Abergavenny land sale in 1921; the plotlands and small scale speculative developments. By the 1930s with bank rate fallen from 6.2% to 2.2% and the introduction of the 1933 Housing Act, there was a dramatic increase in house-building. In the period 1932-36, 93% of the core area housing was constructed, a staggering proportion which coincided with the peak in national house-building figures. (Table 5)

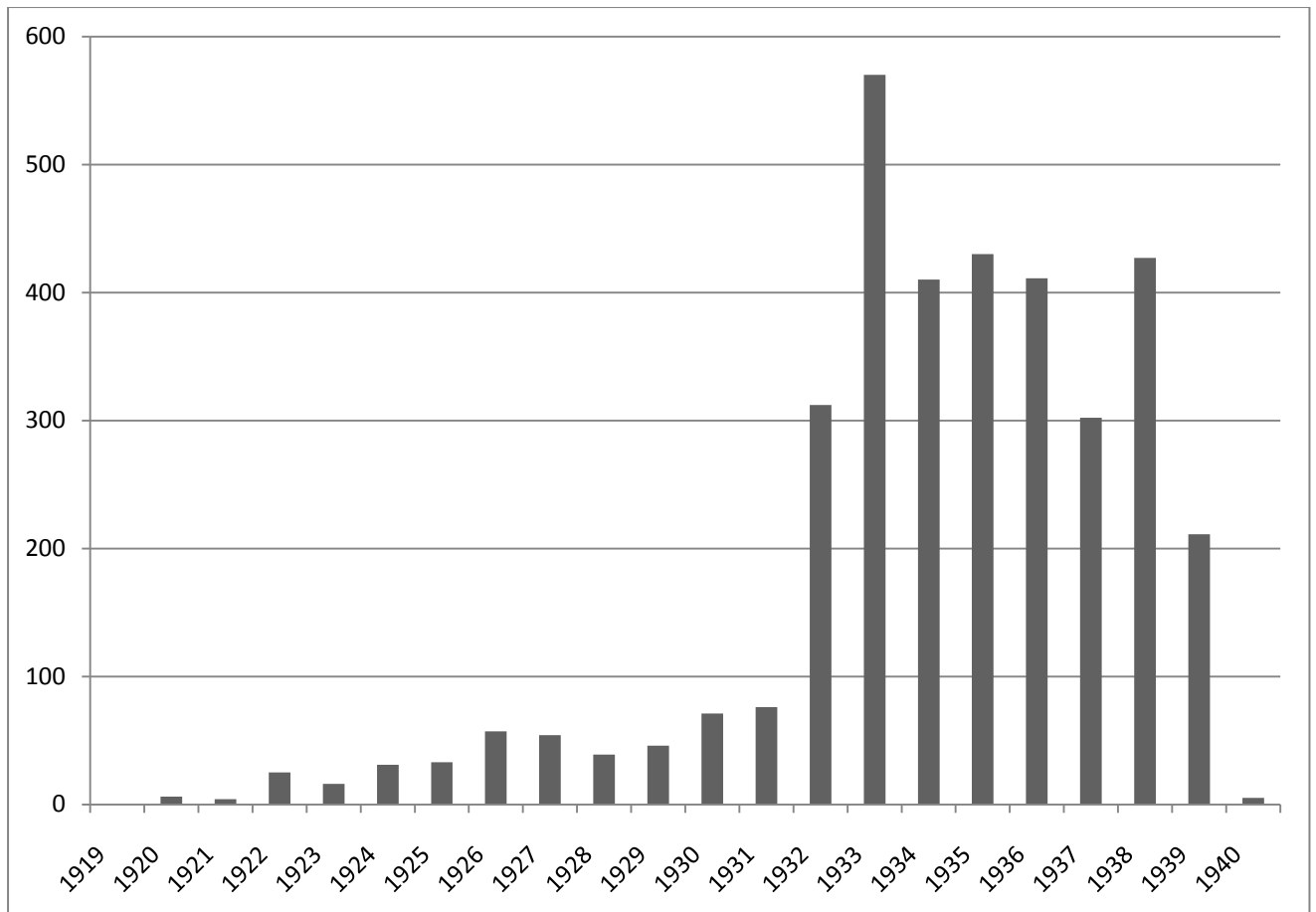


Table 9

Patcham area (core and periphery) housing permissions granted

Source: Brighton and Hove Building Control data

(Fig 2 shows the area of the core and periphery.)

The post-war growth is initially in the plotlands and speculative properties. After 1931 the surge in housing numbers reflects both the changing economic situation and the subsequent arrival in the area of the major building firms of Ferguson, Braybon and Lee. The growth in the period 1932-36 is largely due to the construction of the Ladies Mile, Old Mill and Carden Avenue Estates. After 1936 the main area of growth was west of the London Road on the Brangwyn and Withdean Estates, and south of the core in the area of Braybon Avenue. These figures are a compilation of house building permissions in the core and periphery areas researched. Data only survives for *extant* properties, but there is no evidence of other than a handful of demolitions within the area.



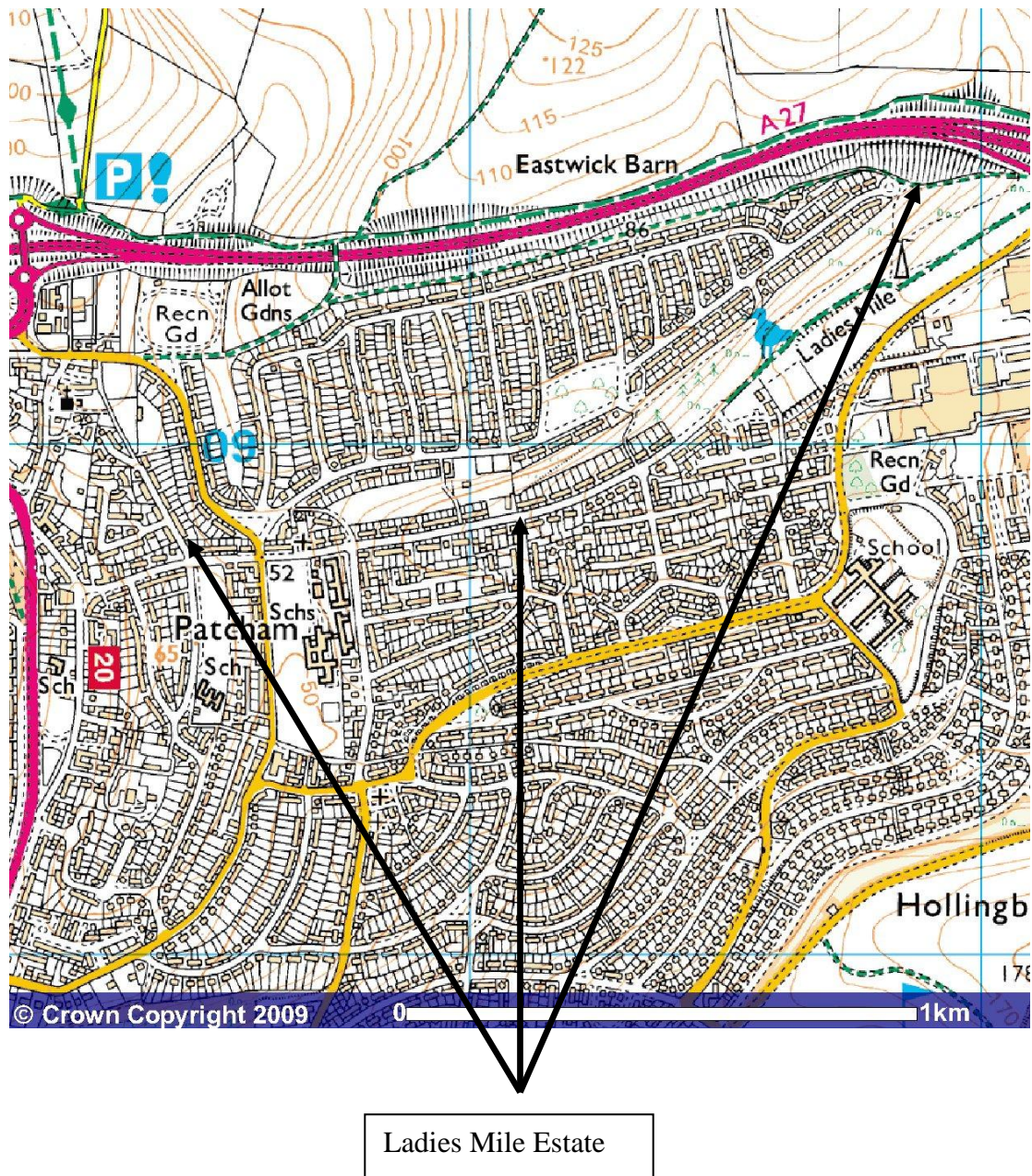


Fig 66

Ladies Mile estate

Source: Ordnance Survey<sup>404</sup>

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Stretching along the valley of Eastwick Bottom, the Ladies Mile Estate was the largest interwar housing project in the South East outside Greater London.

<sup>404</sup> Get-a-Map. Accessed 10.12.09

This change in the structure of the economy, especially in south-east England had a great impact on the built environment and the shape and style of later housing developments. An undated (c1932?) brochure for the Ladies Mile Estate, Patcham, outlined the ethos of this estate as -

‘...in these days of hesitant enterprise when men of lesser courage take the easy safe way of shelving plans and locking up their resources, it is a gratifying thing, deserving of the highest commendation, to find and to write about an instance in which effort and capital is being poured into a scheme of such a nature as the planning, building and development of the Ladies Mile Estate, Patcham. Such a scheme, involving as it does the lengthy employment of a good number of men at a time when employment is none too plentiful and the purchase of material at a time when industrial sales are needed, is commendable, not only for its practical contributions thus made to create work, but for its no less worthy object of placing ideal homes within the reach of people of strictly moderate means.’<sup>405</sup>

This statement on the employment of personnel and purchase of materials was an important consideration, Mowat has judged that employment in the building industry increased by 13.5% during 1934 [6.8% increase in all other industries] when the building of over 200,000 homes provided work for 25% of the building industry.<sup>406</sup> The actual building materials were often imported, with architects plans and council minutes recording the use of imported materials, as in this note for French and Belgian tiles in a letter from a building company to the Clerk of SERDC -

‘...Marseilles, Beauvais and Courtrai-Du Nord Tiles.....are being used on good class houses all over the South of England. For your information there are more than 50 houses in the Hove district which are being sold for £1050 and upwards covered with these tiles...we have a stock of these tiles at Shoreham...’<sup>407</sup>

Not only tiles were being imported -

‘Shoreham Harbour...in May nearly ¾ million bricks were brought in and for some considerable time now an average of a cargo a week has arrived [from] Germany, Belgium and Holland.’<sup>408</sup>

In the adjacent district of Southwick one former resident recalled -

‘... there were the ships laden with timber from Sweden, the brick boats from Belgium...to satisfy the 1930s building boom...’<sup>409</sup>

This tendency to import large quantities of building material was worrying, more so as Shoreham and Southwick were at that time brick-making areas. The point was not lost on a

<sup>405</sup> *Ladies Mile Estate brochure* (c1932?) np

<sup>406</sup> Mowat CL (1955) *Britain between the wars* p458

<sup>407</sup> ESRO SERDC DB/B57/10 (31.2.1926)

<sup>408</sup> *BG* 4.7.1925 p2

<sup>409</sup> Sole J (1998) *Southwick revisited* unpub.ms p1

local clergyman, as reported in the local press -

‘Brick as text. In a reference to the tragedy of unemployment in his sermon at St James Church, Brighton the Rev E.J. Barry spoke of the foreign bricks that can be seen being unloaded in Shoreham Harbour. ‘Surely’ he said ‘these bricks should be made of British earth by men who are walking about doing nothing. It is not a question of politics but of common-sense and efficient government’<sup>410</sup>

The worldwide trade recession created a situation where very cheap materials were exported from Europe into the UK, even from such obscure and remote spots as Latvia, from where a brick-laden ship was a participant in the Rye Harbour lifeboat disaster of 1928.<sup>411</sup> There were of course British suppliers of similar goods, and building materials advertisements of the period show, alongside the imports of Finnish wall boards and Trinidad asphalt, British products such as bricks from Accrington, Bridgend, Dorking and Midhurst, roof tiles from Bridgewater, steelwork and metal lathing from West Hartlepool, metal framed windows from Birmingham and Braintree, roofing felt from Belfast and electrical cable from Manchester. The completed house carcasses were the recipients of a similarly wide range of British products as building trade artefacts, fixtures and fittings; with plywood, veneers and parquet flooring from East London timber yards, fireplaces from Northampton, fire-grates and stair rails from Glasgow, metalwork from Bromsgrove, paints from Darwen.<sup>412</sup>

After completion the new householders would be fitting the home to their personal requirements, and contemporary advertisements indicate furnishings fabrics from Ramsbottom, stainless steel tableware from Walsall, ‘Old World’ chairs from Maidenhead, floor polishers from Birmingham and the wax polishes for those floors from Ronuk of Portslade.<sup>413</sup> The rapid growth in suburban housing and its associated peripheral consumption goods had a knock-on effect further along the economic supply chain, as the stores which stocked the goods saw an upturn in High Street trade. Every new dwelling needing a myriad of household goods, new goods for new housing, but also many of these dwellings were first homes or a dramatic up-grade from parental shared homes or from cramped inner city accommodation. There was much that needed to be purchased, contributing to a welcome buoyancy in the domestic goods market. Anecdotal evidence from the late Bernard Johnson, the owner of Johnson Brothers, a large central Brighton department store, was that his firm

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<sup>410</sup> BG 15.8.1931 p11

<sup>411</sup> Collard J (1985) *Maritime history of Rye* p 90

<sup>412</sup> RIBA/ Randal-Philips R (1936) *Houses for moderate means*; Pierce SR and Cutbush P (1938) *Planning: an annual handbook* various endpaper adverts

<sup>413</sup> *The Ideal Home magazine* (1938) various pages



benefited greatly from the westward expansion of the interwar Hove suburbs that lay along the bus routes of developing New Church Road, leading to his store in Western Road, Brighton.<sup>414</sup> Similar effects were seen in London Road, Brighton where the Patcham suburbs were served by bus routes which stopped outside the large Brighton Co-op store. There were a range of small drapers, furnisners and household stores clustered in the road opposite the Brighton Co-op, one of which, Roslings, was owned by a Patcham landowner Mrs Rosling who subsequently sold her house in Carden Avenue to JL Edwards another London Road store owner, thus emphasising the urban-suburban linkages.<sup>415</sup>

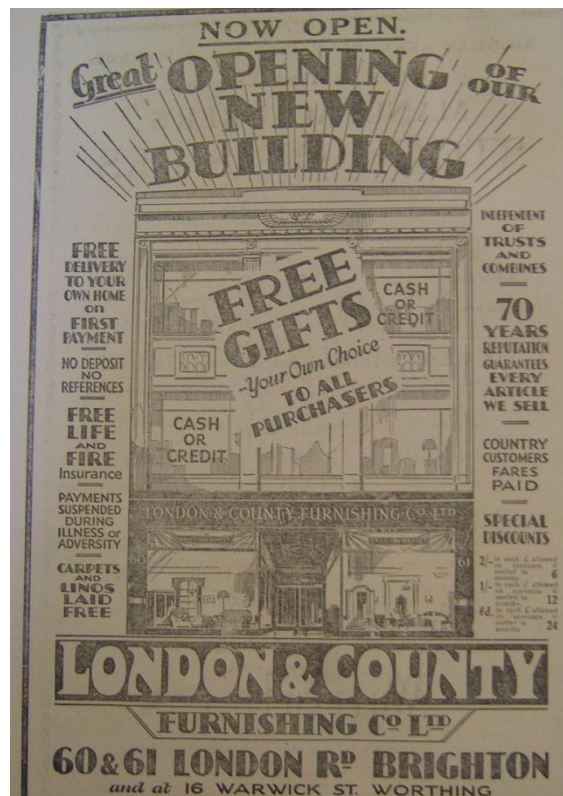


Fig 67

London and County Furnishing store.<sup>416</sup>  
Source: Brighton and Hove Herald

By the interwar the London Road shopping area was already an established destination for the burgeoning northern suburbs and the rapid growth of Patcham added to the customer catchment. New stores were opened, and here the advertising lures offered fares paid to country customers and the suspension of hire-purchase payments, a selling point in a time of financial adversity.

<sup>414</sup> Bernard Johnson pers.comm (c1982?)

<sup>415</sup> ESRO ACC/A5310/76 Farrington and Whiting clients papers

<sup>416</sup> BHH 20.6.1931

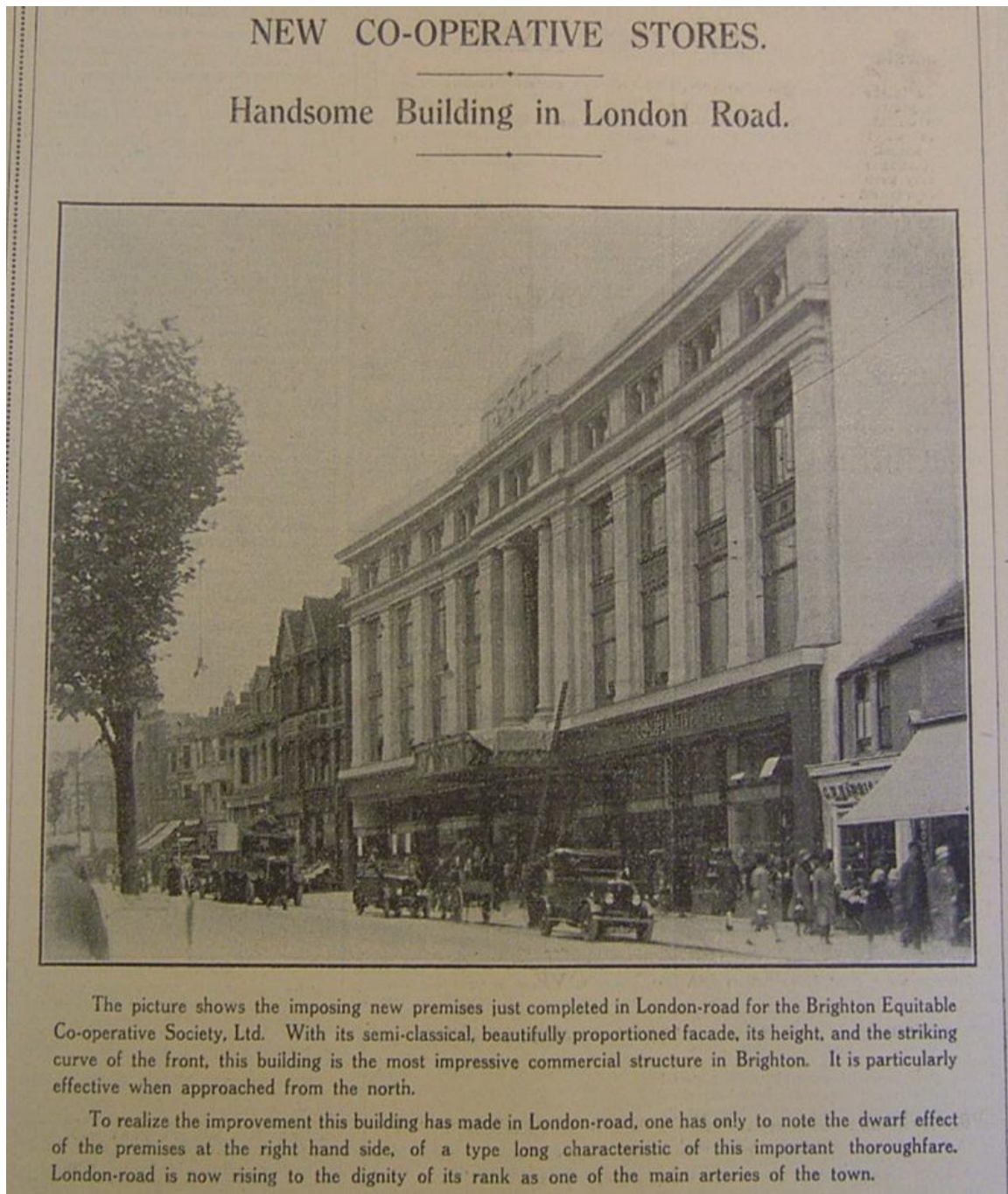


Fig 68  
Brighton Co-op, London Road 1931  
Source: Brighton and Hove Herald<sup>417</sup>

London Road was lined with stores supplying the new interwar suburbs with a wide range of domestic consumer goods, boosting the local and national economies. It was one of a series of personal and commercial linkages that the central city had with its northern suburbs. The Brighton Co-op had various locations in the resort, but the new 1931 department store consolidated the outlets in London Road, which, after Western Road was a principal retail district.

<sup>417</sup> BHH 20.6.1931

The new goods could be delivered free (fig 67) but those moving house into a wider geographical area would need the services of a furniture remover. Inner urban households had frequently moved short distances to nearby streets and this could be accomplished through the hiring of a ‘truck’ or stout hand-cart to move the household chattels; Diplock’s in North Road, Brighton was a long standing truck hire business that rented trucks daily to both householders and street corner ‘barrow-boys’.<sup>418</sup>



Fig 69  
Diplock’s Yard, 73 North Road, Brighton  
Source: author’s own image

Those moving to the new suburbs far out on the downland surrounding Brighton, needed to be supplied using a different mode of transport, and in this interwar period there was an increase in the number of furniture removals firms operating within the conurbation. Local trade directories show a rise from 15 such firms in 1925 to 22 in 1937. The year book of the national trade body, records 13 firms in Brighton for 1937 compared to the 8 recorded for Sheffield, the sixth largest city in UK.<sup>419</sup> Although London urban growth was facilitated by the use of rail transport, the expansion of housing into the Brighton rural fringe was made easier by the rapid growth in motor transport, both cars and motor-buses, and with lorries for

<sup>418</sup> Diplock pers.comm (c1993?)

<sup>419</sup> *Pikes Directories* 1925, ;1937; *Furniture Removers Yearbook 1937-8* p74-5, p142



the commercial sector, many purchased as war-surplus.<sup>420</sup> Not only was it new furniture that was purchased, there was a buoyant trade in second hand goods on offer, either through fixed traders in retail outlets or through auction sale rooms. Mead and Co - 'Premier Brighton Removers' - my grandfather's firm - combined two aspects of this, being furniture removers and auctioneers with large sale rooms and offices at Bond St in the centre of Brighton, and extensive garage and storage space in suburban Preston<sup>421</sup>



Fig 70  
Mead and Co furniture removals lorries.  
Source; Brighton and Hove Herald 1931<sup>422</sup>

The growth of removal firms was an indicator of the wider effect of economic growth, stimulated by the expansion of the housing area in the interwar period and the requirement to both fit out the new dwellings and move existing artefacts.

The 'driver' for this economic expansion was the particular circumstance of the national economy in south east England and its local components, which in the post-war period was giving Brighton and Hove a healthy growth, tied to its role as the major UK resort, with associated retail, transport and entertainment industries. A summary of local trade in the Brighton MOH report of 1919 will suffice for much of the interwar period -

<sup>420</sup> Barker T and Gerhold D (1995) *The rise of road transport 1700-1990* p62

<sup>421</sup> Mrs A. Mead pers.comm. (c1993?)

<sup>422</sup> BHH 17.10.1931 p6



‘The staple industry of Brighton is catering for visitors by hotels and boarding houses and apartment letting, in consequence the laundry work in Brighton is in excess of that done in other towns, and also there is a greater number of domestic servants. Brighton is a shopping centre for central Sussex; it is also a distributing centre. The London, Brighton and South Coast Railway Co has erecting and repairing shops at Brighton and Lancing, the employees at Lancing being mostly resident in Brighton. Electrical accessories, one large firm employs 1156 as compared with 461 prior to the war. Diamond works [employ] 500. There are 332 fishermen.’<sup>423</sup>

By the 1930s the electrical firm noted above, Allen West, was one of the major employers in the area, continuing the postwar growth and overtaking the Southern Railway as the town’s principal single employer. With the rapid increase in the use of electricity and electrical domestic goods, Allen West was a key component in the resort’s ‘modern’ progressive stance. Brighton was in line with many other southern towns, with a small but steadily growing light industrial sector linked to the ‘new’ industries reliant on electrical power, supplied in Brighton’s case by the local authority, through its large Portslade power station adjacent to Shoreham Harbour; the advertising for this service stressed the modernity of the power supply -

‘BRIGHTON’S ELECTRICITY SERVES... [and] with its aid, NEW LABOUR SAVING HOMES are run with the utmost economy while Electrical Equipment enhances the value of New AND MODERNISES OLD HOUSES.’<sup>424</sup>

One aspect of this growth was seen in the local finance sector where there was a dramatic increase in the fortunes of locally based building societies such as the Regency, the Brighton, Hove and Preston or the Brighton and Sussex which would advance up to 90% of the purchase price of housing.<sup>425</sup> The building societies were aided by the uncertainty in the financial situation, after the suspension of the gold standard in September 1931 there was a dramatic drop in interest rates from a high of 6% in early 1932 to 2% in June of that year, a rate which persisted -

‘...those in employment were experiencing a rise in incomes [and] the rise in building societies, which did not suffer in the recession saw savings pour in.’<sup>426</sup>

The widening housing market was rapidly drawing in purchasers from the non-traditional house buying sectors of the working classes. Patcham residents interviewed for this research revealed a wide cross section of employments amongst the early settlers, many of them from

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<sup>423</sup> *MOH Annual report 1919* p5

<sup>424</sup> *Brighton official handbook 1935-36* p133

<sup>425</sup> *BHH 1.3.1933* p8; *BHH 17.6.1933* p4; *BHH 4.3.1933* p5

<sup>426</sup> Merrett and Gray p40

‘blue-collar’ situations - laundry worker, electrician, charge hand fitter at the Brighton loco works, sawmill foreman, a coach builder at a Hove motor coach works, a postman, a typewriter repairman, a machine-tool operative; all reflecting aspects of Brighton’s overall economic structure and part of the growing skilled artisan and service sector that Merrett and Gray recorded -

‘...owner occupation [was] becoming the tenure for the middle classes and labour aristocracy.’<sup>427</sup>

Typical of this social turn-around in occupancy was George Clift, a regular soldier who had worked in a Brighton jewellers in Kensington Gardens, and latterly as a postman, but who moved into the brand new bungalow, 36 Barrhill Avenue, in 1932 before upgrading to a new house at 191 Braeside Avenue in 1938.<sup>428</sup> There were of course more middle class residents, Dorothy Seymour, an artist at number 5 The Deeside was described as a ‘blue-stocking’ and staunch Labour supporter;<sup>429</sup> other occupants of Ladies Mile Estate were listed by Ester Sowter as - ‘a bank manager, insurance agent, pharmacist.’ George Clift’s neighbours were a retired army officer (with double-barrelled name), a teacher, and a retired Metropolitan Policeman.<sup>430</sup> Elizabeth Jenner’s father moved to Mackie Avenue in 1936, he had a more obscure occupation being a ‘colporteur’ - a seller of religious tracts.<sup>431</sup> One professional remembered fondly by older residents was the occupant of 1 Mackie Avenue, Dr Christopher Rozario the estate GP; Dr Rozario belies the idea of the suburb as being reactionary and conservative, long experience of interviewing Patcham residents always brings the same responses to mention of him - ‘...a kindly soul’ ‘...a gentleman’ ‘...a marvellous man’ ‘...only charged what you could afford’.<sup>432</sup> All the more surprising in the interwar suburb, as Dr Rozario was a Roman Catholic, of East Indian extraction, from Trinidad.

The rapid growth of local building firms, Brighton and Hove as a financial centre, a major transport hub, service centre and the expanding leisure industry were all important components of the south coast’s cushion against the national economic downturn. There was an expanding industrial component to the area’s economy with one large heavy engineering enterprise at the Southern Railway works at Brighton station, and earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the largest single employer in the resort. There was a growing sector of the new light

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<sup>427</sup> Merrett and Gray p38

<sup>428</sup> G.Clift [son] pers.comm 31.7.2009; *Kellys Directory* 1934 p184

<sup>429</sup> N.Gorton Pers.comm 23.6.2006

<sup>430</sup> G.Clift Pers.comm 31.7.2009

<sup>431</sup> E.Jenner Pers. comm. 5.4.2004

<sup>432</sup> G.Clift. pers.comm 31.7; J.Carter. Pers.comm. 24.5.2006; E.Sowter. Pers.comm.23.6.2006

manufacturing industries at Allen West electrical in the Lewes Road or the machine tools of CVA in Hove, near Green's cake mix factory and Dubarry perfumes; Ronuk polishes were west of these in Portslade, all substantial employers.<sup>433</sup> One of the most visually striking of the manifestations of modernity was the erection in the ten years from 1926 of a range of large stores on the north side of Western Road Brighton, the resort's major retail district. The rebuilding was a consequence of a major road-widening scheme, part of the resort's interwar rejuvenation -

'...the road has been widened since the war...one is impressed by the expedition with which the existing businesses were prepared with their new frontage...'<sup>434</sup>

The styles are a span of interwar designs, the classical columns and portico of the former Boots building, the corporate style of Marks and Spencer, through to the Modernistic imagery of Primark employing a façade equally at home in Miami South Beach as in Brighton.<sup>435</sup>



Fig 71  
Former British Home Stores (now Primark) Western Road Brighton, built 1934  
Source: authors own image

<sup>433</sup> Groves P (2003) CVA/Kearney Trecker *Sussex Industrial History* issue 33 p10

<sup>434</sup> BHH 4.3.1933 p10

<sup>435</sup> Capitman B (1988) *Deco delights: preserving the beauty and joy of Miami Beach architecture*

## 'Downland Homes by the Sea'

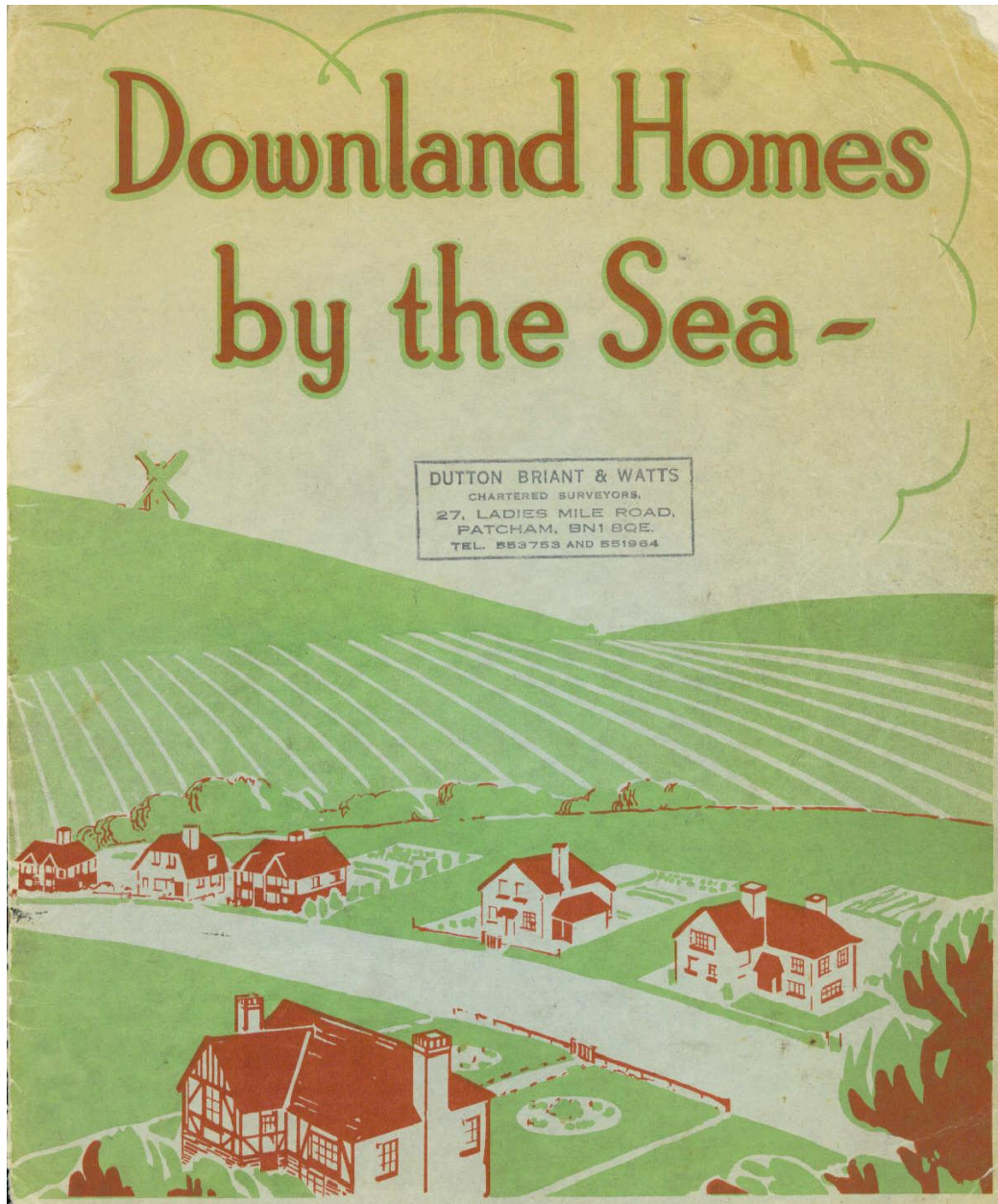


Fig 72

'Downland Homes by the Sea'. Ladies Mile Estate brochure c1934

Source: Brian Tulley collection

Until 1930 the housing erected in the core study area of Patcham was overwhelmingly in the form of individual dwellings, still clearly discernible in the 21st century landscape of the south side of Ladies Mile Road and along the London Road. There was one small estate of bungalows developed late in the 1920s, a ribbon development along Winfield Avenue; and



one area of council houses at Patchdean adjacent to them. These latter were a response to the clearance of the Sweet Hill estate, and an example of the burgeoning awareness of public health and housing issues that impacted on new developments.



Fig 73  
Downs View Estate, Winfield Avenue  
Source: author's own image 7.2.2004

A 1926 development for H. Hyde Chambers, surveyor, of Ship St Brighton.<sup>436</sup>  
This fitted with Whitehand and Carr's observation that -

*'Unlike in the 19th century there is little evidence of speculative building having been undertaken by people whose livelihood was not primarily derived from house building or house selling.'*<sup>437</sup>

Plots, in the form of long rectangles in the proportion roughly 1:4 were being sold to small developers leading to a piecemeal growth, as example the bungalow at 112 Ladies Mile Road 'Carnavon'[sic] which lay on a plot 40' wide by 154'6'.<sup>438</sup> After 1930 there was a dramatic change in the scale and style of housing appearing in the parish, one that would create a

<sup>436</sup> ESRO DB/D57/534 A/5

<sup>437</sup> Whitehand JWH and Carr C (1999a) *Morphological periods: planning and reality. The case of England's interwar suburbs* p218

<sup>438</sup> ESRO SERDC 169/1

landscape of housing that displayed some classic examples of the various interwar suburban styles of architecture. The random nature of the earlier developments, their small scale and lack of cohesion to other schemes and dwellings all conspired to present the Patcham suburban housing as a disparate mix of styles and structures and a form that could be witnessed across the UK; but there was now a major change to both the numbers of houses and the form of the estates that they comprised. Whitehand and Carr observed that -

‘...many of the firms that had been building in the Edwardian period had ceased to exist by the 1920s and that, when conditions more congenial to house-building eventually returned, new firms and organisations with less adherence to pre-war practices were formed.’<sup>439</sup>

One of these new firms will form the core of this section, the Ladies Mile Estate Co [LME] of George Ferguson, whose first estate brochure lauded him thus -

‘Ladies Mile Estate has been planned and built by a man who need not have planned it nor built it! A man to whom the financial part of this undertaking is not a need...’<sup>440</sup>

In Patcham the change in the structure of the built environment can be clearly discerned within the wide range of styles and forms of development, and the effect of the new large scale housing estates is in stark contrast to the earlier fragmented patterns. In November 1931 land previously held by the Patcham Place estate, and latterly by the farmer Albert Stay of Place Farm House, was purchased by George Ferguson, a successful Scots entrepreneurial developer who had previously been involved with estates in London and West Sussex. Ferguson had arrived in London from Dalbeattie, Kirkcudbrightshire, prior to World War One, and was building at Tulse Hill Park 1922-28 and in West Sussex at Lancing’s Orchard Estate in 1929-31. He was a speculative builder in the grand style and a man who generated equal measures of love and loathing to those who encountered him. Mrs Dore, whose husband was Ferguson’s chauffeur, moved into a new house at 123 Ladies Mile Road in June 1932; she described the estate builder as - ‘a money made man, not a real gentleman.’<sup>441</sup> A local planning officer described him as ‘opportunist’ rather than speculative.<sup>442</sup> Seventy-five acres of land east of Patcham village had been purchased after the death of Albert Stay, when the holding was sold by his widow Arethusia. A plan was submitted in November 1931 for the project, accompanied by a letter from Ferguson’s solicitors -

<sup>439</sup> Whitehand and Carr (1999a) p247

<sup>440</sup> *LME* brochure (c1932?) np

<sup>441</sup> Dore pers.comm. 31.3.1983

<sup>442</sup> Shipley pers.comm. 19.5.2003 [Much of the incidental detail in this section was supplied by the late Berys Shipley a local historian who lived in LME from 1948 to 2004 and who researched Ferguson extensively]



‘...requesting an immediate decision on the scheme...in view of the large amount of expenditure involved and the large number of men in Mr Ferguson’s employ who might otherwise be dismissed.’<sup>443</sup>

The transfer took place on February 1st 1932. The large downland fields - Church Field and Barn Field, that lay north of the Patcham Drove were rapidly transformed into one of the largest housing schemes in the south of England, and within five years almost 850 dwellings had been built; in styles and shape that were, and are, the epitome of interwar suburban housing; but alongside these were three parades of shops, a public house (significantly named ‘The Ladies Mile Hotel’), a sports club with bowling greens and tennis courts. In line with the national picture the estate was built with French bricks and Belgian tiles - ‘...bungalows ...roofed with Matt Green Courtrai-Du Nord Tiles.’ Other tile colours available had delightfully English soubriquets - for Continental manufactured goods - ‘Teapot Brown Glazed’ and ‘Marmalade Brown Glazed’.<sup>444</sup> However, much use was made of Sussex stock bricks for the facings, while West Ham Joinery supplied the doors and windows, and the distinctive stained glass was from Cox and Barnard of Hove. Ferguson had travelled extensively on the Continent and in the United States where he had met President Roosevelt. He brought to the South Downs a mix of American business efficiency in the way houses were built, with their standardised plans, bulk buying of materials, motor transport - he employed eight Bedford drop-sided or tipper trucks by 1935.<sup>445</sup>

Ferguson pursued his modernist approach with a curving road plan based on German town planning origins, and advertising of a surprisingly flamboyant nature. In spite of his extreme religious zeal (Ferguson and family were Plymouth Brethren) he had several luxury cars including a Rolls Royce, a Bentley and a Chrysler, all driven by his chauffeur Thomas Dore. Many of the key personnel were also Plymouth Brethren, the architect Billinge, the accountant Wesley, the solicitor and some of the workmen.<sup>446</sup> Ferguson was keen for his entire workforce to be Plymouth Brethren a fact that caused Ray Prior’s father to leave his employ to work for another Patcham builder.<sup>447</sup> There is still a Brethren community in the 21st century with its meeting hall in Vale Avenue, founded by Ferguson’s sister.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> ESRO DB/B30/2 Brighton Council estates and town planning sub-committee 30.11.1931

<sup>444</sup> ESRO AMS 6871/5/1 p22

<sup>445</sup> *Bedford transport magazine* (1935) p132

<sup>446</sup> Shipley pers.comm. 19.5.2003

<sup>447</sup> Prior pers.comm 16.9.2009

<sup>448</sup> Shipley pers.comm. 19.5.2003

Ferguson visited many of the design capitals of the period, Vienna, Berlin and New York, in an effort to gain new ideas and methods. His idea to build standardised housing, offered to clients in well-illustrated pattern books, with all features as standard, from cavity walls to fitted kitchens and electrical points to road charges and estate facilities, was to create a style of estate design that was a model of its kind. It presaged a range of other schemes from builders large and small that transformed the former agricultural landscape of the area. A distinctive point of the estate is the naming of many of the new roads with a 'Scottish' theme; curiously in this part of the UK far from his native Kirkcudbrightshire, Ferguson applied road names local to his home area or variants of the originals. A key road on this estate and on his earlier scheme at Tulse Hill, London is a Mackie Avenue - his wife's maiden name was Anne Weir-Mackie.<sup>449</sup> The earlier Ferguson development at Lancing has an Annweir Avenue. The names of the avenues running north from Mackie Ave all reflect the south west Scotland link, Barrhill is in his home town of Dalbeattie, Craignair is a granite quarry just outside the town, Sanyhills though is the local pronunciation of a beach, Sandyhills, nearby on the Solway Firth; one of Ferguson's key workers, his clerk-of-works, Alex Caig, had met his wife at Sandyhills beach and moved south with the firm from Craignair.<sup>450</sup> Baranscraig comes from a hotel 'Baronscraig' in the seaside village of Rockcliffe. Further east on the post 1934 avenues the Scottish geographic trawl is wider, taking in Deeside and Lomond Avenue. One Scottish location alluded to in his overall plan, the furthest avenue east, was to have been Perth, clearly indicated on a map in the final brochure of 1936, however failure to purchase Eastwick Barn on Braeside Avenue meant a realignment of the road to curve inside the curtilage of the barn, resulting in the loss of the planned Perth Avenue.<sup>451</sup>

The LME was built in two stages, from 1932-34 the western half was constructed on the Church and Barn Fields, typically large Downland arable holdings, the eastern boundary was the hedge bordering the adjacent Eastwick Laine. Baranscraig Avenue which follows the hedge line is the only straight road on the estate and until built over was the holding area for all the estate trees<sup>452</sup>. Prior to 1934, Eastwick Laine, once part of the Abergavenny estate, had been purchased in 1921 by Albert West of Cold Dean [sic] farm located in the valley to the east of the Ditchling Road ridge; one resident recalled –

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<sup>449</sup> *Hassocks Garden Village* p15; Dore pers.comm

<sup>450</sup> Caig pers.comm 2.11.1983

<sup>451</sup> I am indebted to Morag Williams of Dumfries and Galloway for much Scottish local detail in this section

<sup>452</sup> Elms pers.comm. 29.1.2003

‘Farmer Stay, pasture, Farmer West, wheat.’<sup>453</sup>

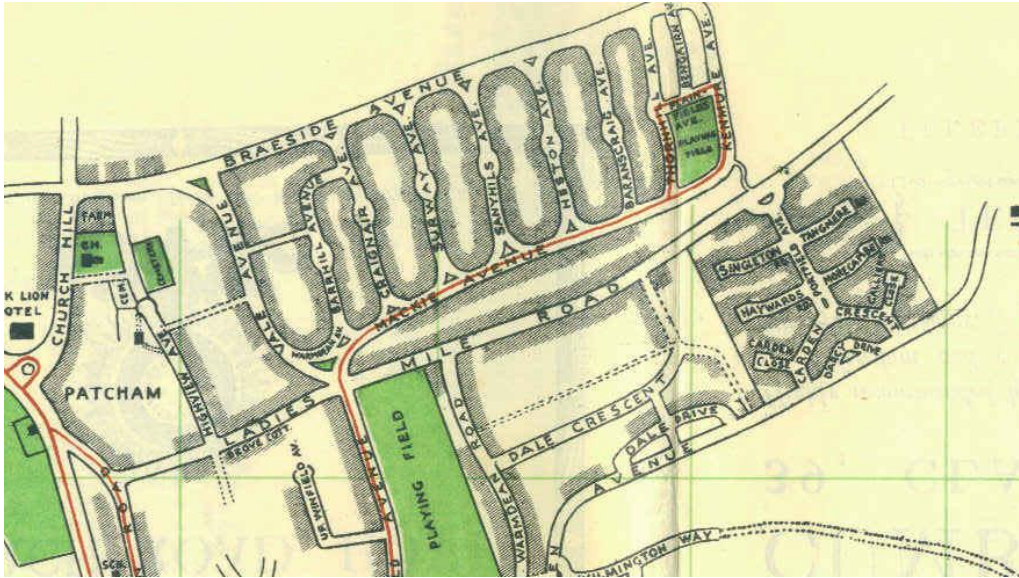


Fig 74  
Patcham street plan c1935  
Source: Brighton tourism guide

The Scottish nature of road naming is seen in this map showing the uncompleted Ladies Mile Estate. N.B. Braeside Avenue does not in fact link to Vale Avenue but to Barrhill Avenue. Developers maps could show proposed developments rather than the reality; here that conjecture has been taken as fact by the borough tourist department. The final tranche of the LME was extended in 1936 eastward of Kenmure Avenue.

There are aerial views of the estate which show the clear distinction between the curving avenues of new housing in the western half of Eastwick Bottom contrasting abruptly with the agricultural holding to the east (fig84). After the purchase of Eastwick Laine in 1934 building rapidly spread along the valley bottom and onto the gently sloping northern side, leaving the steep southern slopes as a public open space; as with all chalk landscapes the Eastwick valley was asymmetric, with opposite facing steep and shallow slopes. A series of flattened ‘S’ shaped avenues, that were similar to the oxen-ploughed ‘ridge and furrow’ landscapes of an earlier period, were developed with increasing numbers of bungalows, on the valley slopes that rose to the east and north. Ferguson offered an alluring package, even in a period of declining house-prices LME properties were cheap, bungalows from £499, standard ‘semis’

<sup>453</sup> Elms pers.comm. 29.1.2003

£550. Well publicised house-sized hoardings advertised ‘Houses from £499’; there were in fact only four of these, being the interior units in two, four-house terraces.

Ferguson knew his market and did not stray far from the perceived ‘dream home’ of the English, that range of building materials and styles that came to be variously known as ‘Mock Tudor’, ‘Tudorbethan’ ‘Jacobethan’ or more disparagingly ‘Shack-o-Bean’. Curtis observed-

‘The majority of people’s perceptions of the idea of home [had] constituent elements, a hip roof with somewhat overhanging eaves, a chimney, a front door with some kind of cover, windows with small panes, pebble-dash, brick, wood as materials...those able to choose an architect, chose a style with resonance from the English past, Tudor villas, Queen Anne suburban mansions, picturesque bungalows...this situation is paralleled in the catalogues of speculative builders who rarely advertised a modern design with the exception of the occasional whitewashed flat-roofed seaside villa.’<sup>454</sup>

Certainly this can be seen in LME where the five year span of development covers a wide swathe of traditional and contemporary architectural styles. (This will be covered in more detail in the next chapter.) The notion of the suburb as a landscape of conservative values and architectural design, of Tudor beams (albeit ‘Mock’), of patterned brick and stained glass panels showing Elizabethan galleons, has to be seen against another suburban landscape of nascent modernity; this was the housing whose designs had filtered down from the drawing boards of Connell, Ward and Lucas or even more daringly from the Continental influences of Erich Mendelsohn, Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier.<sup>455</sup> This uneasy mix has been outlined by Gilbert and Preston who noted that -

‘Suburbia has good claim to be the locus of twentieth century modernity...the emergence of modern suburbia in the nineteenth century was accompanied...by counter-accounts that emphasised both the positive qualities of the suburbs and their more ambiguous hidden depths.’<sup>456</sup>

The designs that were filtering into the South Downs from the intellectual heights of Highgate or from the cosmopolitan seaside glamour of Brighton’s Embassy Court were not universally appreciated, as this acerbic comment from Sir Reginald Bloomfield notes -

‘[new architecture] is essentially Continental in its origin and inspiration...it claims as a merit that it is cosmopolitan. As an Englishman and proud of his country, I detest and despise cosmopolitanism.’<sup>457</sup>

<sup>454</sup> Curtis W (1975) *English Architecture: 1930s* p62,69

<sup>455</sup> Pevsner N (1960) *Pioneers of modern design* p217

<sup>456</sup> Gilbert D and Preston R (2003) ‘Stop being so English’ - suburban modernity and national identity in the twentieth century (in Gilbert D, Matless D and Short B (2003) *Geographies of British modernity* p187-88

<sup>457</sup> Curtis p47 Various endpaper adverts



Fig 75  
Braeside Avenue and Mackie Avenue  
Source: author's own images 10.8.2004

International Modern and the British 'Moderne' styles, both built 1934.  
The archetypical 'Hut' meets the archetypical 'Machine' in a British compromise.

The use of the Modern Movement styles on Braeside, the extreme northern avenue of LME seems to be nodding to Ferguson's idea of modernity and progress, yet staying within the architectural conservatism of the vast bulk of British suburbia. In a typically British compromise there were a number of hybrid 'Moderne' creations conjoining the archetypical suburban 'Hut' to the 'Machine', echoing the Le Corbusier statement that - 'A house is a machine for living in.'

Ferguson himself lived on the southern edge of the LME at the White House, a grand detached house built at the birth of the estate early in 1932 on the highest point of urban Patcham, with white roughcast walls, a green tiled roof and elegant stained glass. It looks out over the estate through a fringe of pine trees, said to have been planted by Ferguson to remind him of his Scottish roots. Speculation by disgruntled staff was that Ferguson closely watched the estate under construction from his vantage point. The White House, with a long walled garden lying west of the house, lay detached from its nearest estate neighbour, 123 Ladies Mile Road, conveniently the home of the chauffeur Thomas Dore.<sup>458</sup> The local hunt met at The White House gate thus giving Ferguson an added social cache as the new 'squire'.<sup>459</sup>

<sup>458</sup> Dore pers.comm. 31.3.1983

<sup>459</sup> Elms pers.comm. 29.1.2003



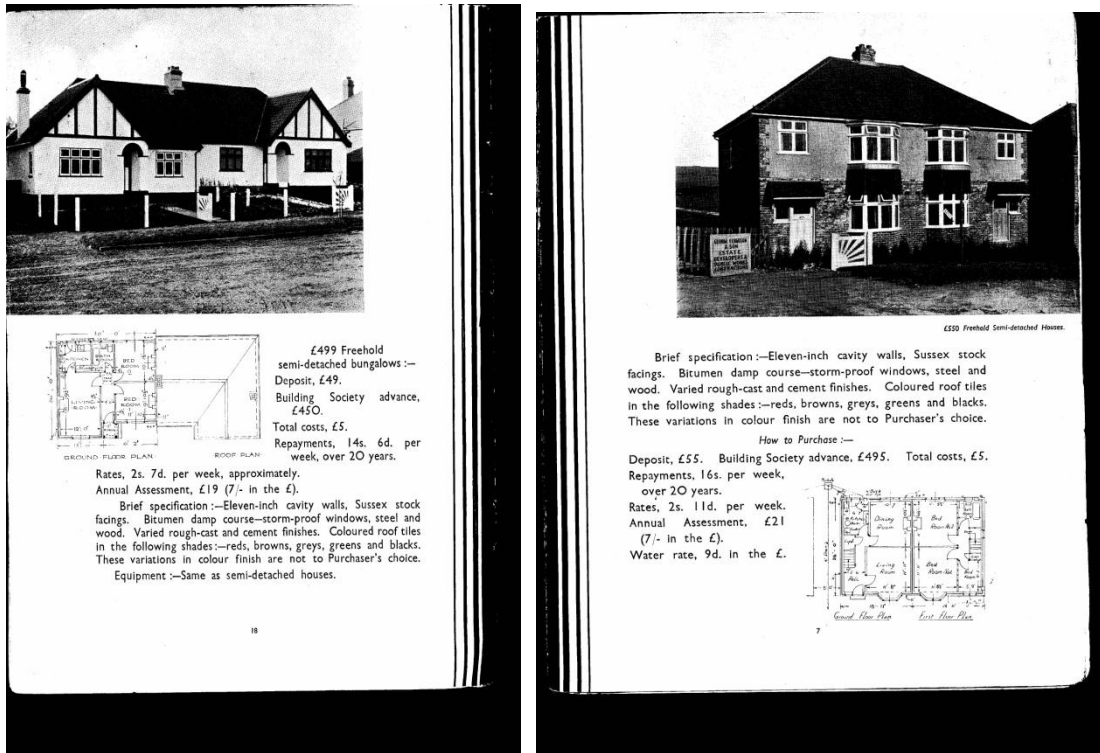


Fig 76  
 Ladies Mile Estate basic properties- bungalow and house c1934  
 Source: Brian Tulley collection



Fig 77  
 The White House 149 Ladies Mile Road  
 Source: author's own image 7.2.2004

Built in 1932 as George Ferguson's home and positioned at the summit of the ridge.  
 In the early 21st century, the home of the Dharma Buddhist School.



The advertising that 'sold' the idea of suburban living to the newly aspirational workforce was effusive in its prose; a supplement on new housing estates in the Brighton and Hove Herald made the statement -

'Shall we look first at Patcham - the Ladies Mile that sounds inviting; and it looks as nice as it sounds. How cunningly these cheerful villas have been placed upon the gentle hillside. Not in rows you will notice, but stepped back here and there, turned a little now and then, just to get the full benefit of the view or the sun, or maybe just be neighbourly...you can buy these charming houses - real chummy little homes - as cheaply here, where you get so much for nothing, as in any crowded suburb of London, where you get so little.'<sup>460</sup>



Fig 78  
Ladies Mile Estate. Aerial view north east c1934  
Source: John Carter collection

This shows the LME focus, the Patcham Clock tower, with the accompanying features, two parades of estate shops south of the triangular green, open spaces and general garden suburb layout. South of the Estate lie the earlier scattered plotlands and allotments of the former Abergavenny lands.

Compared to the cramped conditions of the 19th century inner urban areas and the army huts of the early 1920s these properties were at the cutting edge of suburban style -

<sup>460</sup> *BHH supplement* pIII 14.4 1934

‘...planned for the practical housewife too. For these are All-Electric homes. There is a garage or the space for one in all these properties. On this ideal estate you will find your ideal home-at the ideal price!...from £499.’<sup>461</sup>

Those coming to the estate from the densely packed resort were both variously astonished, and critical of the quality of the housing, one man declared his house - ‘as near as you get to heaven’<sup>462</sup> but the size of the new dwellings drew this from one Mackie Avenue resident - ‘tiny kitchens, small staircases, impossible to move furniture.’<sup>463</sup>



Fig 79

The Deeside shops

Source: author's own image 28.3.2009

*'25 April.1935 - proposed shops and flats nos 140-146 Mackie Avenue'* <sup>464</sup>

Provision of services to new suburban communities grew in prominence as the nature and scale of the housing schemes changed in the 1930s. Howkins (1938) noted -

‘In an estate of considerable size a shopping area is automatically created, although the full value of this will only be realised when the estate has been developed. Hence the value of the shop sites lies in their monopoly, and does not necessarily bear any relation to their original cost to the owner’<sup>465</sup>

<sup>461</sup> BHH 11.2.1933 p13

<sup>462</sup> Dore pers.comm. 31.3.1983

<sup>463</sup> Gravett pers.comm.30.3.1983

<sup>464</sup> BHBC fiche NB X110/2

<sup>465</sup> Howkins F p172

The estate facilities, often noted by their absence from earlier schemes, were a key feature of LME publicity and as the housing area grew, then so too did the range of facilities and recreations provided by Ferguson -

‘No woman who lives at Ladies Mile will have difficulty with her shopping for there is an excellent shopping centre on the estate’<sup>466</sup>

A point noted by one early resident, Mrs Slater who moved to Mackie Avenue in 1933 - ‘A very friendly estate [and] lots of shops’ - but she also remembered that the two shopping areas at Ladies Mile Road and The Deeside each had a butcher’s shop run by the same family, so prices were uncompetitive. Ferguson would allow nothing to be sold on LME that could be obtained from his own outlets.<sup>467</sup>



Fig 80  
Mackie Sports Club, Mackie Ave built 1935  
Source: author’s own image 10.8.2004

The bowling green turf was from the Solway resort of Silloth, close to Ferguson’s home area of Kirkcudbright, and cost £1000 an acre in 1935.<sup>468</sup> The Ladies Mile Estate lauded its social facilities, even to the extent of providing an estate map showing bowling greens and tennis courts [hard and grass] with a swimming pool adjacent to the club.<sup>469</sup>

<sup>466</sup> *Downland homes by the sea* p2

<sup>467</sup> Slater pers.comm.23.3.1983

<sup>468</sup> Slater pers.comm.23.3.1983

<sup>469</sup> *Downland Homes by the Sea* (c1936?) end paper map



For leisure there was the Mackie Sports Club, with a planned, but sadly never built, swimming pool. The Mackie Club has immaculate bowling greens and tennis courts; publicity for this element of the estate appeared in the Jubilee supplement of the local paper -

‘...the official opening on May 11th [1935] by the Right Hon. Gerald de Vere Loder MP, assisted by the Mayor of Brighton and Ald.C.Kingston. The Club is situated in Mackie Avenue, the centre of the Estate, and has a Pavilion for the convenience of players and spectators in Mackie Gardens, which overlooks the Club courts and green.’<sup>470</sup>

With the pine clad slopes of the Ladies Mile Open Space rising behind and with the Union flags flying above the veranda, the club has an imperial air; it could be set in the Simla Hills, redolent of the Indian raj.

In November 1935 Mr and Mrs Gravett moved from central Brighton to number 258 Mackie Avenue, far up the eastern end of the valley; Mrs Gravett recalled -

‘My husband spent 2/6d a week on cigarettes, he gave up smoking and spent the 2/6d on fares into Brighton, a 7d a day workman’s ticket, he worked as a foreman at Eede-Butt’s sawmill’.

Life for the young housewife that was Mrs Gravett, was very different here on the urban fringe, in the new suburb high in the South Downs valleys -

‘It was very cold that winter, the back door iced up...a flock of sheep came into the back garden...I had only seen sheep in Sainsburys...I stayed in until a shepherd and his dog came to fetch them.’<sup>471</sup>

The existing Patcham residents were sceptical of the new estate; Alec Caig, a Ferguson sub-contracted builder, came to one of the first houses built in LME at 23 Ladies Mile Road in 1932; he remembered the locals’ comment - ‘They would rather see oxen than people’.<sup>472</sup>

Ladies Mile Estate, with its constructed roads, shopping parades, sports club, hotel, bungalows with Sunburst doors, coloured tile roofs, fitted lampshades and power points, was a far cry from the built landscape of earlier suburban Patcham; the chicken farms, army huts with paraffin lamps, asbestos sheet roofs, water butts, and cess-pits.

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<sup>470</sup> BHH Jubilee supplement 6.5.1935; ESRO DB/B88/1/27

<sup>471</sup> Gravett pers.comm.30.3.1983

<sup>472</sup> Caig. pers.comm. 2.11.1983

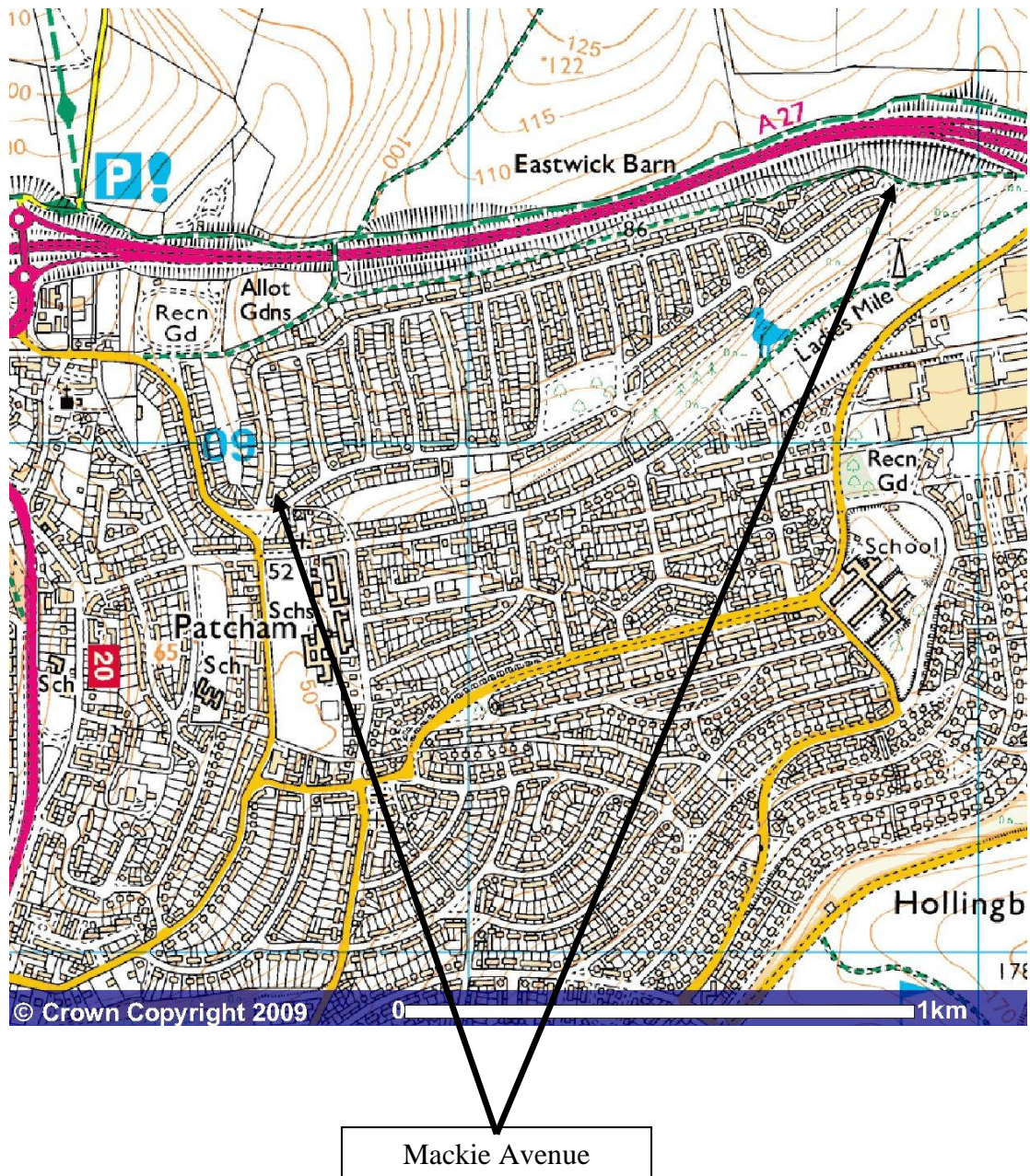


Fig 81

Mackie Avenue

Source: Ordnance Survey<sup>473</sup>

© Crown copyright Ordnance Survey. All rights reserved

The longest road on the LME and the only one that was constructed across the two development stages of the estate; it contains examples of all the estate housing

<sup>473</sup> Get-a-Map accessed 10.12.2009





Fig 82  
240 Mackie Avenue  
Source: author's own image 10.8.2004

An identical style to that purchased by the Gravetts in November 1935; Brighton and Hove Building Control records show –

*'Plan of proposed bungalows nos 208/274 Mackie Avenue'  
Permission granted 25 March 1935. 'Glazed Roman tiles' on roofs,  
Sunburst doors'*<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> BHBC NB X/102/1





Fig 83  
Ladies Mile Estate c1934 aerial view north east  
Source: John Carter collection

The contrast between the earlier southern plotlands and the later northern estate is clearly shown. The hedge line in the far east becomes Baranscraig Avenue following a field boundary shown on a 1750 estate plan. Barrhill Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> from left curves to follow a similar early field pattern. The palimpsest of landscape visible still in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## 6.2

The Modern in the suburb.

*'A town house that is also a 'Downs House' <sup>475</sup>*

(Old Mill Estate advert 1934)



Fig 84

Old Mill Estate<sup>476</sup>

Source: image in author's collection

The modernity seen in the Ladies Mile Estate was refined in this Braybon's estate created on the site of the Withdean Nursery adjacent to the site of Ballard's windmill.

With the detailed look at the development of Ladies Mile it must not be forgotten that there were a host of allied schemes in the area, all experiencing the same growth in the local economy and tapping into the growing house-buying sector of the population. A major local building firm was TJ Braybon, a firm that had grown from its origins as a 19<sup>th</sup> century plumbers and gas fitters, into one of the principal developers in interwar Brighton and Hove; so go-ahead were the directors that they had utilised the rapid expansion of domestic radio sets amongst the populace. With adverts banned from the BBC many UK manufacturers used the advertising provided by Continental stations that were beamed into the UK; 'Braybon's Brighter Brighton Broadcast' was a programme easily accessible along the south coast, where it was distributed by wireless relay services from Radio Normandie.<sup>477</sup> There were 14

<sup>475</sup> BHH 24.11.1934 p12

<sup>476</sup> OME brochure cover c1934

<sup>477</sup> BHH 25.2.1933 p9

separate Braybon estates in the locality by the mid-1930s stretching from Bevendean in the east to Shoreham in the west, characterised by the phrase ‘The Englishman’s Home’ and emphasising their use not just of English bricks and Crittall’s Braintree windows, but more parochially of Amberley lime from the kilns near Arundel.<sup>478</sup> In Patcham there were many Braybon developments; at Valley Drive in Withdean – ‘Space, sunshine, shelter and clear country air’<sup>479</sup> which lay outside the core study area of this research, and at Carden Avenue Estate (CAE) and Old Mill Estate (OME) both within the core. CAE lies between the Ladies Mile Road and Carden Avenue, the ‘New Road’ of earlier maps. Like LME, CAE was laid out on a plan of roads, but centred on the spine of Portfield Avenue with spurs east and west. It were clearly intended for the lower end of the expanding private housing market, being on a cramped site on a steep slope, only at the northern end where it adjoined Ladies Mile Road is there an attempt to emulate the upmarket elements of the other Braybon developments. Cheaper than LME, in a less favourable position and less well laid out, with few estate facilities, CAE still has a different air to it, with narrow cul-de-sacs choked with cars, many on the narrow verges and unsympathetic ‘renovations’ Only in the tiny spurs of Galliers Close and Carden Close is there a softer tone and a feel of rural edge housing.



Fig 85

Carden Avenue Estate c1935

Source: Brighton tourism map

*‘Carden Avenue Estate...within 5 minutes’ walk of Carden Avenue Post Office where 5b buses run to Castle Square every ten minutes*<sup>480</sup>

<sup>478</sup> BHH 1.7.1933 p9; BHH 3.6.1933 p9

<sup>479</sup> BHH 21.4.1934 p11

<sup>480</sup> BHH 6.1.1934 p5

<sup>480</sup> BHBC file cards NB 9369/4





Fig 86

Carden Close, Carden Avenue Estate: *'rus in urbe'*.

Source: author's own image 28.3.2009

*'Carden Avenue Estate, type C semi-detached bungalows  
Red/brown tiles, cream plaster, projecting course, common stocks'*



Fig 87

Carden Crescent, Carden Avenue Estate

Source: author's own image 28.3.2009

*'Houses on plots 51-66 Carden Crescent, Red Brown tiles and Dark Brown tiles, Cream plaster (Nos 55/56 pink plaster) Tile hanging same as roof. Projecting course. Common red stocks. Approved. 30.7.1936'*<sup>481</sup>

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<sup>481</sup> BHBC NB 9368

Further south along Carden Avenue, Braybon was undertaking a superior class of housing on the Old Mill Estate and in Overhill Drive. This was a block of land lying between Carden Avenue and the London Road, spread along a low downland spur, formerly the buildings and growing beds of the Withdean Nursery. The land was part of E.C. Curwen's estate, whose ancestor-in-law, William Roe, had purchased the land in 1794.<sup>482</sup> The Curwens were, along with Abergavenny and Paine, the third part of the triumvirate who owned the parish, their domain lying across the southern part of Patcham. As at LME there are still pre-development landscape features which have left their imprint in the suburban landscape. The two lines of trees east of the Nursery, clearly recorded on the Tithe survey 1842 still exist, that in the centre of the map forms the central reservation of Old Mill Close, while that running north from Burntdown Barn is the western boundary of the house plots in Carden Avenue (fig 91). Old Mill was completed in the same year as CAE and shows through the design and advertising prose the spectrum of Patcham's later suburban housing. In the continuum of estate developments the basic housing style and road layout of CAE is in marked contrast to the softer outlines, expansive spatial distribution, house detail and fittings of Old Mill. A brief walk through both areas is sufficient to make comparison, with OME having a quieter, more rural air and appearance, almost a backwater, compared to the more cramped and arboreally devoid CAE on its steep valley hillside.



Fig 88  
Old Mill Close

Source: author's own image 19.4.2007

Patcham palimpsest. This central tree line is a relict feature, noted in the 1842 Tithe Survey and incorporated in the 1936 development.

<sup>482</sup> Thomas-Stanford p38



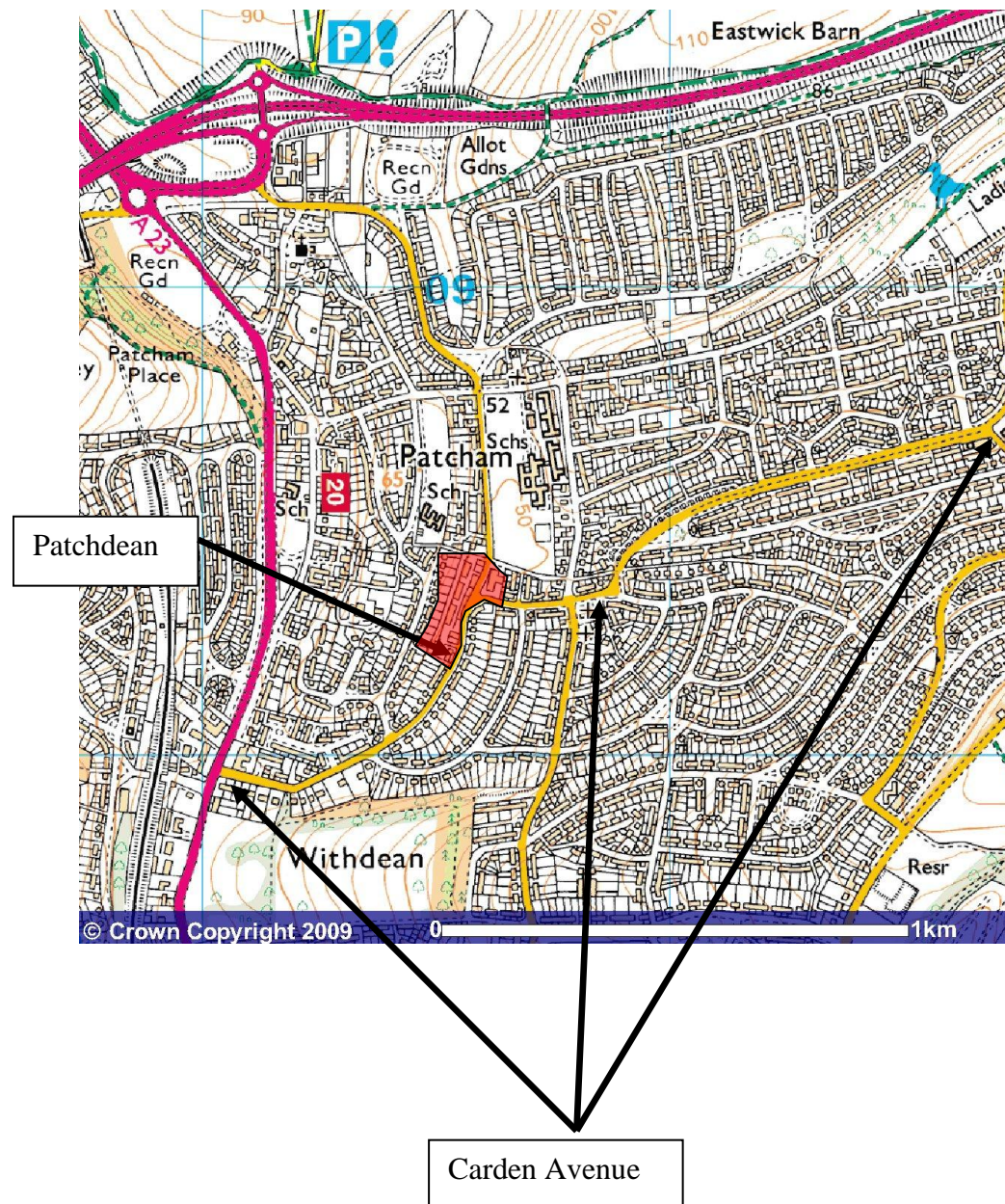


Fig 89

Carden Avenue

Source: Ordnance Survey<sup>483</sup>

© Crown copyright Ordnance Survey. All rights reserved

The 'new road' of the early interwar plans taking its name from the Brighton benefactor and planner Sir Herbert Carden, who fought to keep the high Downland free from development.

<sup>483</sup> Get-a-Map. Accessed 10.12.09



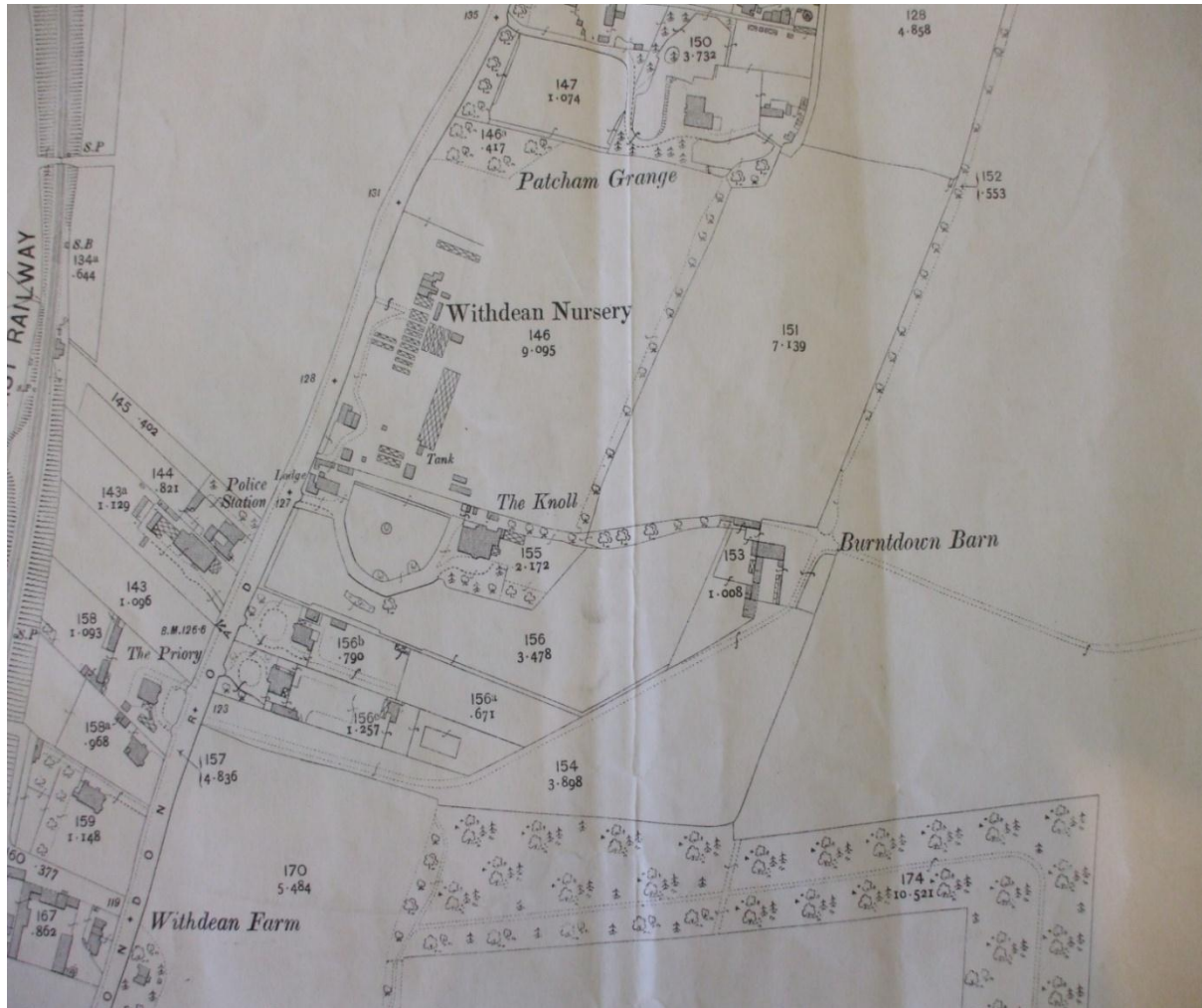


Fig 90  
The land of the Old Mill Estate.  
Source: Ordnance Survey 6" 1911 (section)

There are pre-development landscape features which are visible in the present, along with precursors of the later human landscape. This small portion of the OS map holds many of the indicators of an early 20th century urban fringe. Domestic food provision from Withdean Farm and Nursery, and despite its name - Burntdown Barn; villa ribbon development along a main highway with genteel naming - The Priory, Ashburnham, The Knoll, Patcham Grange; and a police station to serve the new suburbia. The angular copse south of Burntdown Barn is still a selling feature for local estate agents.

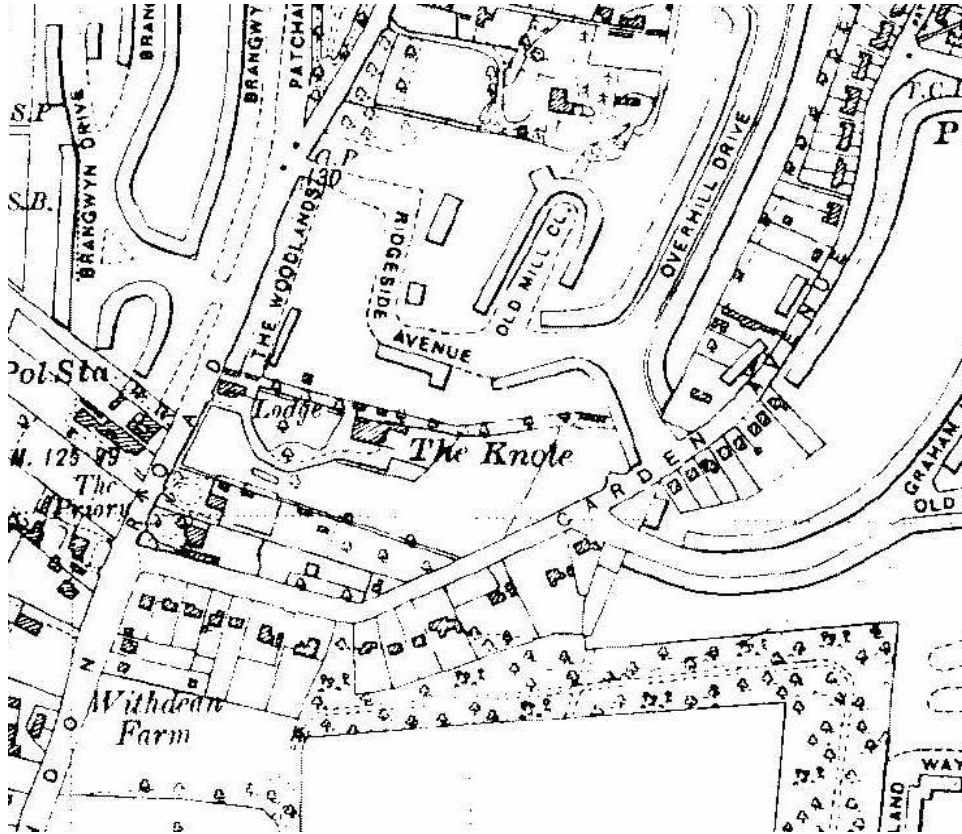


Fig 91  
Old Mill Estate  
Source: Ordnance Survey 6" 1938[section]

The line of Carden Avenue clearly follows earlier field lines; the two belts of trees have left their imprint, one mapped here west of Carden Avenue, the other forms the centre of Old Mill Close. All of the developments at this southern end of the parish are superior housing areas. The earliest suburban housing is the Edwardian villadom near Withdean Farm; by the 1920s the ribbon along Carden Avenue was developing as expensive detached houses. In the mid-1930s Old Mill developed by Braybons, and its western neighbour the Brangwyn Estate by W.H. Lee, grew as upper-end suburbia, a position still evident early in the 21st century.

The final pre-war housing developments within the core were smaller schemes infilling the gaps between the larger projects; other than the odd few dwellings, the housing pattern was completed by a few minor developments amongst which were Highview Avenue, Sunnydale, Court Close, the eastern end of Ladies Mile Road and Dale Avenue.

## 6.3

## Minor developments

*'Not to permit or suffer upon the property...any gipsey [sic] caravan, house on wheels, fair or roundabouts or mental hospital'.<sup>484</sup>*

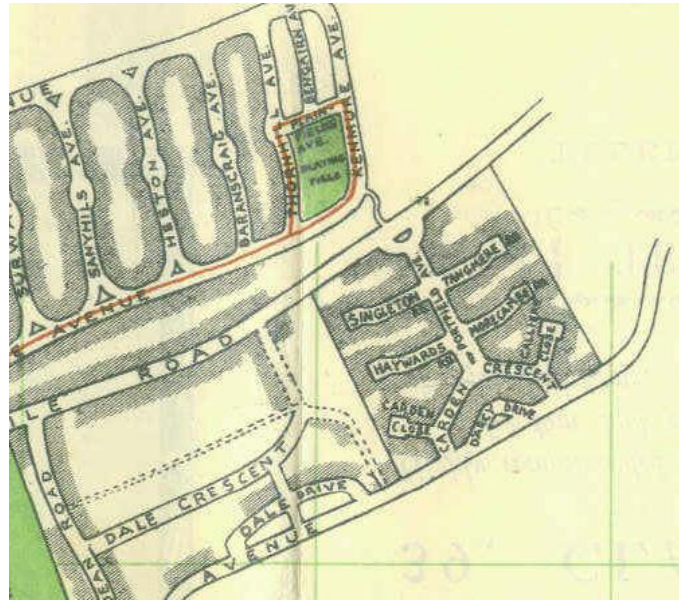


Fig 92  
Patcham c1935  
Source: Brighton tourist guide

Sunny Dale estate was built on the open land lying east of Dale Crescent

A good example of the effect of early field boundaries on the interwar developments can be discerned in the Sunny Dale [sic] Estate. After the Patcham absorption by Brighton in 1928, Horace Costerton's undeveloped land in the eastern portion of Lot 4, stayed in limbo and it was not until 1935 that a small block, developed as the Sunny Dale Estate, was started. In contrast to the properties in adjacent Costerton land in Ladies Mile Road which were all individual properties, built by different builders in different styles at different times, this was a single enterprise and was a reflection of the public mood, moving away from the plotlands of a decade before, towards the standardisation and uniformity seen close by on LME. Sunny Dale Estate was built by E.J. Street and the promotional brochure implies not only Sunnydale Avenue, but also an adjacent un-named road that eventually became Sunnydale Close. This estate only occupied the eastern side of Sunnydale Avenue, as this had been opened along the

<sup>484</sup> ESRO AMS 6621/6/17 (sale particulars 12 Highview Ave North) BHBC NB 8924/2

line of a major field boundary. Cartographic evidence shows this to be in existence on a map of 1750 with a much later map showing it as a hedge line.<sup>485</sup> There is still a hedge line following this boundary, bordering the tennis courts on Mackie Avenue and the eastern boundary of the White House on the north side of Ladies Mile Road; it then crosses Ladies Mile Road and runs south down the slope, through ‘*Worms Dean Laine*’ and round the eastern edge of the block of land, part of the Paine estate, that formed the valley bottom at Carden Avenue;<sup>486</sup> this part of the hedge line is Sunnydale Avenue. This boundary was obviously an established part of the landscape as the 1920’s housing in Ladies Mile Road effectively ceased here.<sup>487</sup> Housing plans show a roadway here from at least the end of 1923 when it has the name Vale Road, confusingly, as this is also the name given in early ESRO plans to Warmdene Road.<sup>488</sup>

Publicity generated for Sunny Dale by the builder EJ Street, directed purchasers to his poetically named dwellings using the ‘healthy housing’ point, where the position was noted -

‘In one of the healthiest districts of Brighton, surrounded by beautiful Downland, sheltered from the North and East, but open towards the Sunny South...on a good elevation sloping gently...come to live at Sunny Dale’.<sup>489</sup>

This avenue with its apposite house names - *Hillcrest, Windy Ridge, Milvue, Downslea, and Hylands* - is the epitome of British suburban housing and in 1936 was the height of sophistication, yet it had as its building line, field boundaries to Abergavenny and Paine properties that can be traced back to a map of 1750 and doubtless much further.<sup>490</sup> As with all suburban housing schemes a close study of the cartographic and place name evidence will provide indication of the prior land-use or ownership. That is well attested to with the hedge line described above, the continuity of the field shape absorbed into the change brought about by the later housing provision. Along the Baranscraig hedge the LME housing was of one developer’s style, along the section south of Ladies Mile Road the Sunnydale estate was of a contemporary, but distinctively different style. The diversity of suburbia.

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<sup>485</sup> ESRO ABE 32a 1750; OS 6’ sheet 66 NW 1932

<sup>486</sup> ESRO AMS 3434 Figg 1811

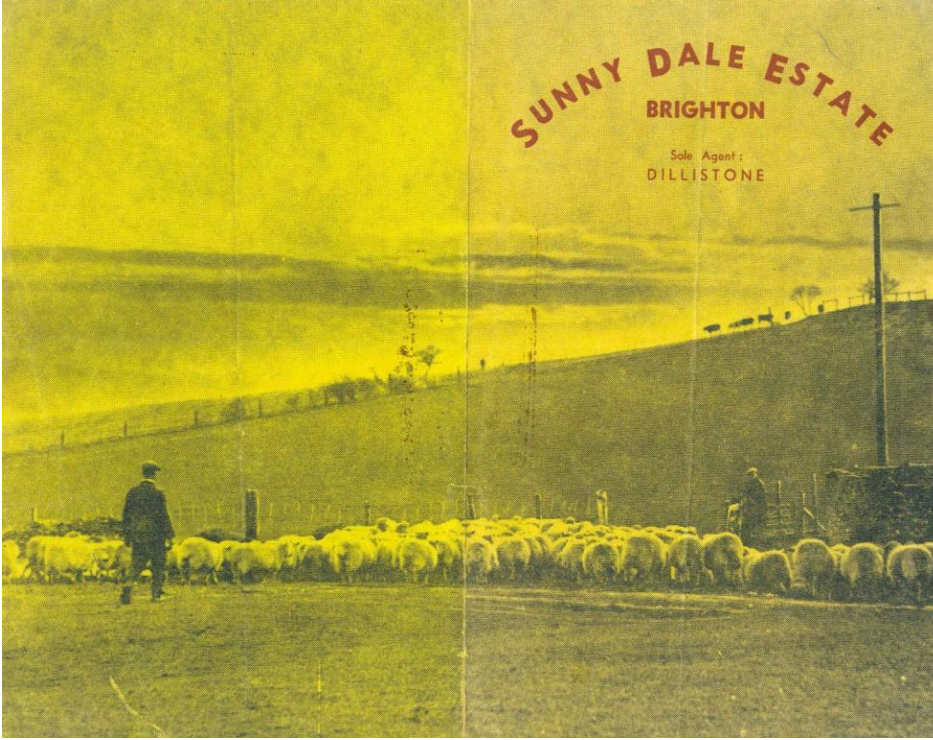
<sup>487</sup> OS 6’ sheet 66 NW 1932; ESRO DB/D57/169/1

<sup>488</sup> ESRO DB/D57/169D/2

<sup>489</sup> *Sunny Dale Estate brochure* reverse 1936

<sup>490</sup> *Pikes* 1937 p591; *Sunny Dale Brochure*; ESRO ABE 32a 1750





**SUNNY DALE ESTATE**  
BRIGHTON  
Sole Agent:  
DILLISTONE

**SUNNY DALE ESTATE**  
*Sunnydale Avenue and Sunnydale Close,  
off Carden Avenue (North Withdean)  
and South of Ladies' Mile Road (Patcham)*  
**BRIGHTON**  
Superior Up-to-date Semi-detached Residences  
at Moderate Prices.

**POSITION.**—In one of the healthiest districts of Brighton, surrounded by beautiful Downland, sheltered from the North and East, but open toward the Sunny South. Near 'buses: Service 15 (from Harrington Road, Preston) stops at the bottom of Sunnydale Avenue, and gives convenient access to Preston Park Main Line Railway Station. Also near Churches, Shops, and Schools, and not far from the delightful new Withdean Park and Hollingbury Golf Course.

**ACCOMMODATION** (£695 type).—THREE BEDROOMS (14ft. 10in. by 10ft. 9in., 12ft. 6in. by 10ft. 9in., 8ft. 3in. by 7ft.); good TILED BATHROOM and SEPARATE W.C.; TWO RECEPTION ROOMS (14ft. 10in. by 11ft. 6in., 12ft. 6in. by 10ft.); particularly fine KITCHEN, with modern "Ideal" Boiler. Good Larder and Coal Cellar. Excellent GARDENS at back and front, level with house.

**SPACE FOR GARAGE** to every house.

**ASPECT.**—West and East. On a good elevation, sloping gently toward the South, sheltered by higher ground on the North and East.

**CONSTRUCTION.**—Brick-built Cavity Walls, good damp-proof course. Fine quality Tiled and Boarded Roof. Concrete foundations and concrete all over site. Builder, Mr. E. J. Street.

**EQUIPMENT.**—  
All Main Services—water, gas, electricity, and drainage—are installed.  
Three Electric power points are provided.  
"Ideal" Domestic Boiler.  
Superior built-in Dresser of up-to-date design.  
Serving Hatch from Kitchen to Dining Room.  
Large hand-basin (in Bathroom).  
Chromium-plated taps throughout.  
Good quality modern doors and enclosed stair-rails.

**TERMS.**—The property is Freehold. The price includes all law costs and stamp duties, the only incidental payment due from the purchaser being the road charges, which may be estimated at less than £20.

**CASH £695** PRICE  
Instalment Terms (to approved purchasers)  
From **£35** Down  
DOWN

Repayments  
Per Week  
**17/7**  
on the 24 year basis

Come to live at Sunny Dale!  
Why not 'phone me at Brighton 6061, for an appointment\* to view? I should be pleased to conduct you by car.

Sole Agent:  
WILFRED DILLISTONE,  
F.A.I.,  
24 RICHMOND PLACE AND  
23 BEACONSFIELD ROAD,  
BRIGHTON

HEAD OFFICE FACES THE EAST  
SIDE OF ST. PETER'S CHURCH.  
'Phones: BRIGHTON 6061, 1246

\* Not Sundays, please.

© 1936 Herald Ltd.—405—1758

Fig 93  
Sunny Dale Estate, Patcham, brochure 1936.  
Source: Marilyn Dodd collection<sup>491</sup>

<sup>491</sup> Sunny Dale Estate brochure cover and reverse 1936 (brochure on loan from Mrs M. Dodd)

Edwin J Street himself lived in Sunnydale Avenue at 'Kopriva'; there were no numbered houses amongst the 10 in the estate, all properties being named.<sup>492</sup> Street's development was governed by a restrictive covenant when the land was purchased in 1932; Costerton was obviously keen to keep up the value of the land and property he owned in the area -

'[the Purchaser]...not permit or suffer the land thereby conveyed...to be used for the purpose of any offensive, noisy or objectionable trade or business nor any purpose that might be or become a nuisance, danger or annoyance to the Vendor or to the occupiers of any land or buildings.'<sup>493</sup>



Fig 94  
Sunnydale Avenue east side  
Source: author's own image 21.1.2006

*'Mottled tiles to porch, Red or mottled sand faced tiles  
White or Cream cement rendering (first floor)  
Stock brick panel red facing centre (below window) both floors  
Burgess Hill multi-coloured stocks,  
Log glass panel and small square door'*<sup>494</sup>

As a brand new house, Hylands [later numbered 34] Sunnydale Avenue, was lived in by Mr and Mrs John Campin-Smith after their marriage in August 1936; they stayed there until Sept 1967. Their daughter remembers animals being kept on land behind their house on a

<sup>492</sup> *Pikes* 1937-8 p591

<sup>493</sup> Covenant to Lyncroft, 32 Sunnydale Avenue [in authors possession]

<sup>494</sup> BHBC NB 9828/4



smallholding, until Sunnydale Close was built on the land sometime around 1955; access to the land was from a gap between 20-22 Sunnydale Avenue.<sup>495</sup>

At the far western end of Ladies Mile Road along the south side, on the slope running down to Old London Road - The Mill Field <sup>496</sup> - lay a block of land part of the Paine lands held by Patcham Place. Unlike the Paine land north of Ladies Mile this did not form part of LME, and on the crest of the development wave in 1936, semi-detached houses were built looking across undeveloped fields to the church. These houses on a high bank were built for W.J. Head of Tongdean Lane, Withdean, Patcham. There was a conscious effort to move away from the accusations of 'jerry-building' that had dogged earlier schemes and the materials detailed on the plans of the architect R.A. Winder show this.



Fig 95

Ladies Mile Road 16-14

Source: author's own image 28.3.2009

*'Proposed semi-detached houses Ladies Mile Road plots 10-11 for WJ Head esq. Nos 14/16 Ladies Mile Road 26'x 145'.*

*Stack-Cullamix (tinted). Marley Sand faced tiles (Mottled). Cream (render) Red facing bricks, Sussex stock facing bricks, Oak pale fencing'.<sup>497</sup>*

<sup>495</sup> Dodd pers. comm. 30.9.2006

<sup>496</sup> ESRO AMS 3434

<sup>497</sup> BHBC NB X 375

Court Close Estate is a cul-de-sac running off Vale Avenue built in 1936 on the western fringe of the study area, even a cursory glance reveals it as a superior housing area, its architects Clayton and Black, of Prince Albert St. Brighton were one of the borough's most prestigious firms and responsible for some of its distinctive interwar buildings, especially examples of Brewer's Tudor. The quality of the detail in the housing, as noted on the architects plans shows how the standard was created - 'Antique handmade sand faced tiles, local multi-colour stock bricks, knot-less pine'<sup>498</sup> and amendments to the original plans contain the covenant -

'The putting course and tennis courts are solely for the use of the occupiers of the 20 single private dwelling houses...and no form of business or commercial house or sub-division into flats will be permitted. No building to be nearer than 3ft to adjoining boundary...density 4 houses per acre.'<sup>499</sup>

To the east of Warmdean Road, part of Horace Costerton's Lot 4 from the Abergavenny sale, there was until the mid-1930s an area of undeveloped land which has proved elusive to research, this is Dale Crescent, Dale Drive and Stoneleigh Avenue, an area that formed the 'back land' to the Ladies Mile Road and Warmdean Road plotlands; this area behind Warmdean Road is recalled as orchard land.<sup>500</sup> The developer of some of the properties was Wallace Clarke whose name appears in plans sampled for the road.



Fig 96  
Wallace Clarke advertisement  
Source: Kelly's Directory 1939

<sup>498</sup> BHBC fiche NB X461/1

<sup>499</sup> BHBC fiche NB X461/2

<sup>500</sup> Rosemary Whatford pers.comm. 5.6.2007



Fig 97

Dale Crescent

Source: author's own image 20.7.2004

Wallace Clarke the builder lived at 3 Dale Crescent

*'24. 9.1936 proposed 2 pair houses Dale Crescent 3 beds...for W.H. Clarke nos1/3, nos5/7. Tiles, concrete, brown (Marley Antique), Bonnet hips, Cream cement, Henfield wide cuts.'*<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> BHBC NB XZ668



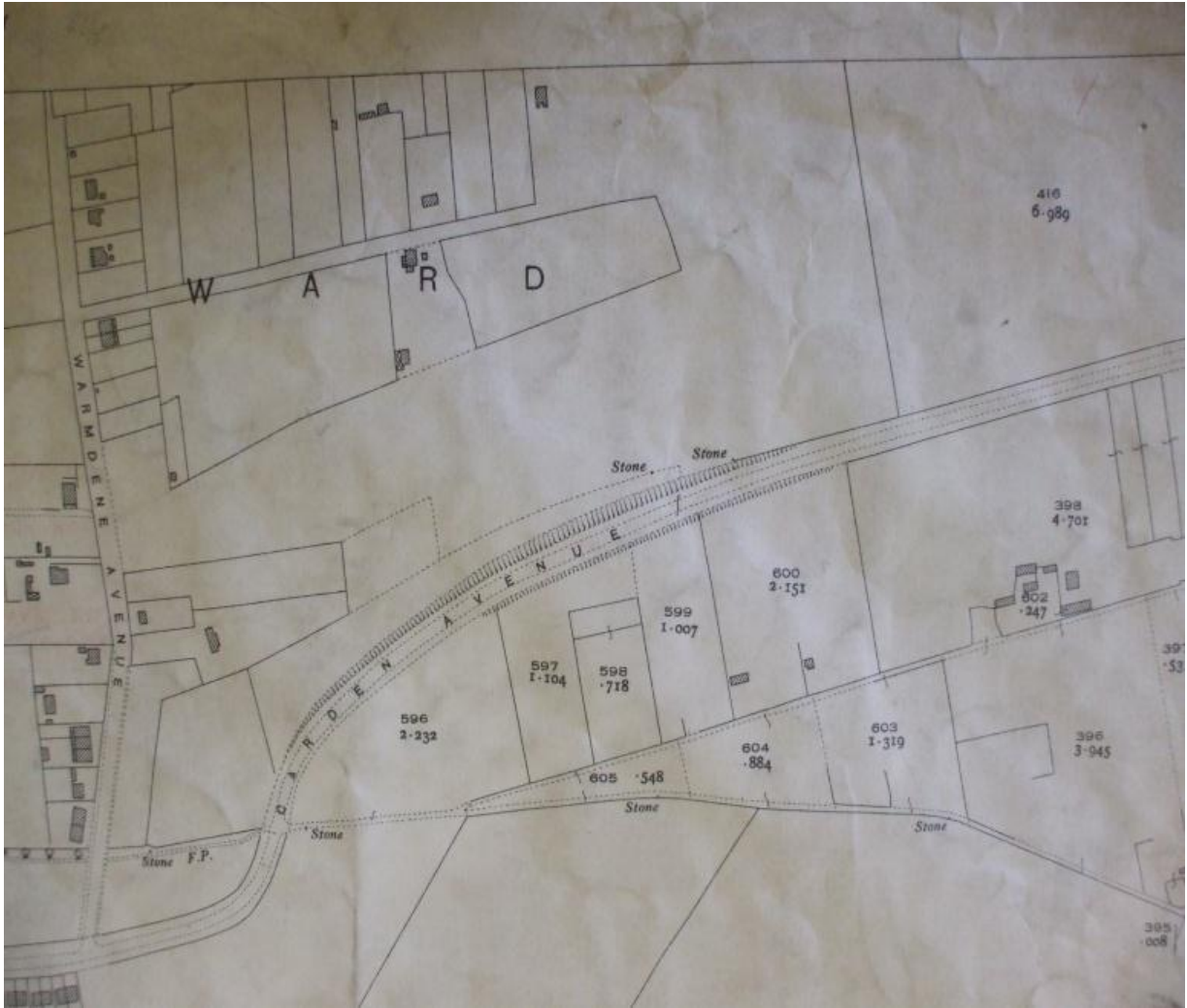


Fig 98  
Carden Avenue, Patcham 1931  
Source: OS 6' map

The area of Dale Crescent and its adjacent developments lies in the centre of the map, north of Carden Avenue, where an un-named pathway leads to open land. The track following the boundary stones along the lower section of the map still functions as a 'twitten' and sets of steps running behind housing and through Hollingbury.

Towards the end of the 1930s house building had slowed considerably both nationally and in the area under study. In the core study area, the figures drop from a peak of 453 dwellings in 1933 to 51 in 1937 and 63 in 1938 (Table 8). This pattern was at variance to building in the area of Patcham peripheral to the core study area, where building continued at a rising pace until war broke out in 1939 (Table 7). This may be attributable to the decline in the amount of land available for building development in the core, and the fact of the larger periphery having more and larger sites to develop.

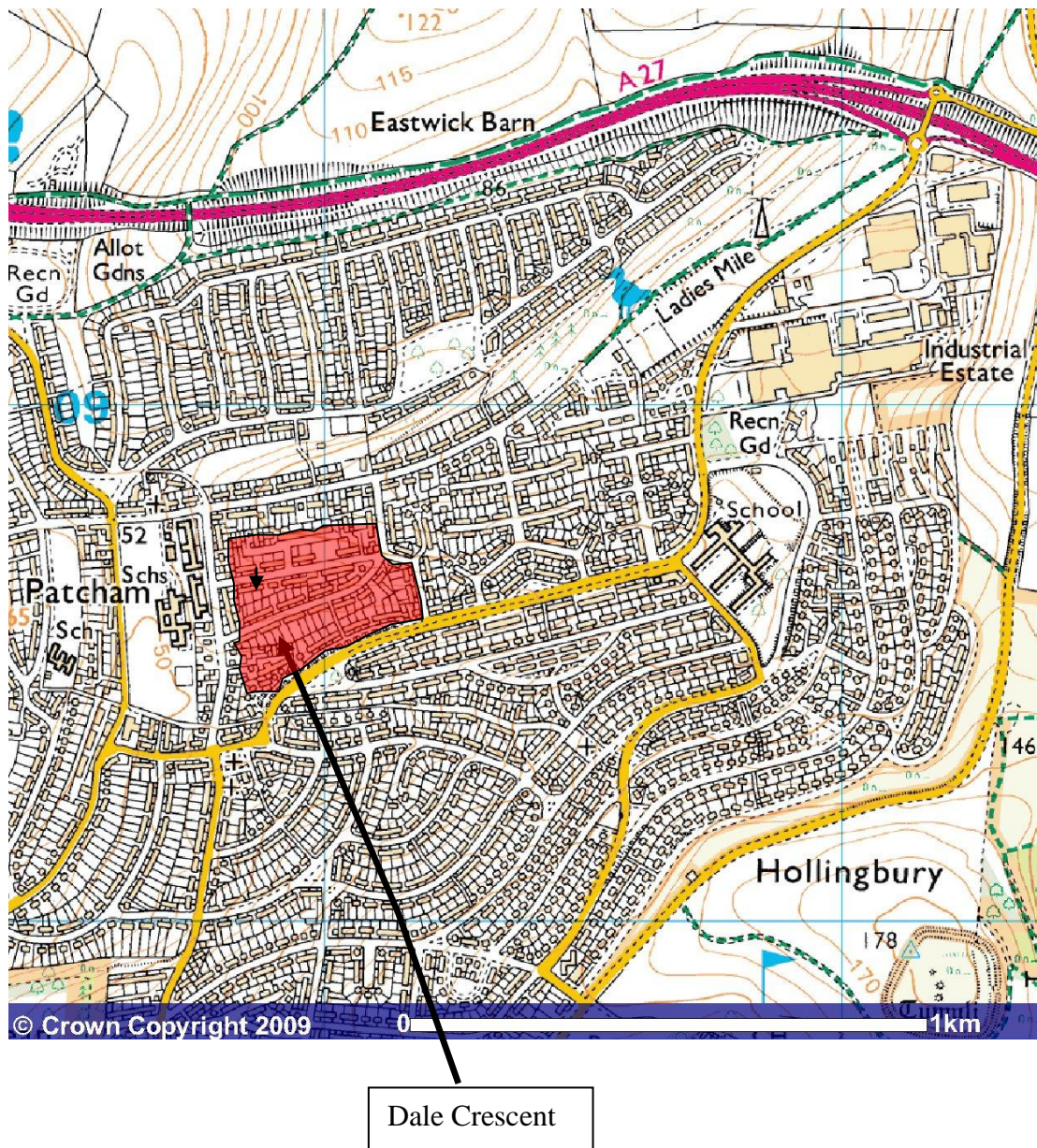


Fig 99

Dale Crescent

Source: Ordnance Survey<sup>502</sup>

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Dale Crescent, a small estate developed in the mid-1930s by Wallace Clark in the 'backland' between Warmdene Road, Ladies Mile Road and Carden Avenue. The eastern boundary follows the line of the field shown on a 1750 estate map.

<sup>502</sup> Get-a-Map accessed 10.12.09



At Highview Avenue South adjacent to the Kestons Field allotment in the Mill Field,<sup>503</sup> the houses have an almost rural setting, overlooking Kestons allotments; the 3 bedroom dwellings designed by Overton and Massey of West St Brighton, and built by T.W. Bassett, were granted permission in December 1935 and were on sale for £850 in June 1936<sup>504</sup>; they displayed a clutch of quality features -

‘Proposed 4 pairs of semidetached houses 3 beds  
30’ x 160’ (narrows to 27’ at rear boundary)  
Red roofing tiles (Marley tiles). White cement. Oak (timbering).  
Standard metal windows in wood frames. Deal hood (to porch).  
Red facing bricks-Dorking pressed bricks.  
Standard metal windows in wood frames mullions at angles. Oak door.’<sup>505</sup>

North across the Ladies Mile Road in Highview Avenue North, there was an open area of land on the western fringe of Ferguson’s land; this had been left outside the main body of LME, as it was intended for individually designed upper middle-class housing, significantly LME’s ‘West End’. Twelve properties were built 1933-35 and all are distinctive. At a property sale in 1939 there is a good description of no 12 which had been built in 1934.<sup>506</sup>

(Handwritten notes) ‘*reserve £975, withdrawn at £900-pleasant detached property in an open situation in this charming suburb. Good views. Near bus routes to Brighton close to shops...All electric*’

‘Lot 3. The attractive detached, double fronted Modern Residence known as ‘Brendelly’ 12 Highview Avenue, Patcham, Brighton 6.  
This house occupies a very pleasant position on the east side of the road with delightful views to the west. Highview Avenue is a turning northwards from Ladies Mile Road a little west of the Patcham Clock Tower. It stands in very pleasant surroundings in this popular suburb of Brighton and is within two or three minutes’ walk of bus services to Brighton and is within ten minutes’ walk of the main London-Brighton road. The house is substantially built of brick, partly splashed with shingle, and has a tiled roof. Three bedrooms, bathroom, three reception rooms ...tradesman’s entrance. The property has a frontage to Highview Avenue of about 40ft.Restrictive covenants...2)...not to permit or suffer upon the property...any gipsey [sic] caravan, house on wheels, fair or roundabouts or mental hospital’.<sup>507</sup>

The big estates of Ferguson and Braybon, the extensive acreage used for the winding avenues and large gardens, left few opportunities for other developers to build in the core area and as has been noted earlier there was a continuing growth of building elsewhere in the Patcham district in the periphery of the core study area; by 1938 the building boom was over, and

<sup>503</sup> ESRO AMS 3434

<sup>504</sup> BHH 13.6.1936 p1

<sup>505</sup> BHBC NB X418 17.2.1939

<sup>506</sup> BHBC file cards

<sup>507</sup> ESRO AMS 6621/6/17; BHBC NB 8924/2



with Ferguson's 850 homes completed, he had moved on to the Hassocks Garden Estate north of the Downs, foretelling an early example of the counter-urbanisation process that saw the post-Second World war expansion of smaller urban areas outside the conurbations. On his move to Hassocks, Ferguson sold the White House which was acquired by Brighton Corporation as a nursery school; the extensive garden that ran west of the White House was sold sometime in 1938 and six semi-detached bungalows were granted permission in November 1938 and were erected in 1939. One was my parents' home.<sup>508</sup>



Fig 100

125-129 Ladies Mile Road

Source: author's own image 7.2.2004

The bungalows erected in the former garden of The White House, almost the last built in the core area before the Second World War. My parents lived here at 125.

Surrounded as they are by the high - French - brick wall of the White House former garden, these bungalows have more privacy than the rest of the earlier housing that backs onto the Ladies Mile Open Space (referred to as Mackie Gardens in 1930s architects' plans).<sup>509</sup>

As the earlier Ladies Mile residents of the 1920s had lost their downland views with the building of 'The Estate', so the later developments along the south side, principally the northern part of Braybon's Carden Avenue Estate, lost their views with the extension of building along the Ladies Mile ridge east of the White House. It has not been possible to trace the ownership of the land in 1938; presumably not Ferguson as he would certainly have built

<sup>508</sup> BHBC card file

<sup>509</sup> Mrs A. Mead Pers.comm. 30.5.1990

on it earlier, although the erection of 38 bungalows in 1939 after his move may have indicated his wish for isolated privacy when in residence.



Fig 101  
217 Ladies Mile Road  
Source: author's own image 10.8.2004

*'Proposed 9 pairs semi-detached bungalows in Ladies Mile Road nos 191-225; architect: Martin Holman 12 Richmond Place, Brighton. 4. 7. 1939 Sand faced concrete tiles Cream rendering Antique facings',*<sup>510</sup>

At the same time as the north side of the road was seeing the erection of those bungalows, a similarly set was appearing opposite along the south side, in-filling the gap between the 1920s housing and Braybon's 1934 bungalows. One developer, J.M. Rutter of Ditchling Road, Brighton, was building on the south side, with some of the 38 bungalows on the north side being part of Louis Isaacs' Swordsmill development and others by W. Ross. Little has been uncovered about these latter developers and their schemes.

By the end of the 1930s there was much of the *Moderne* in the later architectural designs but little that was truly *Modern*, the only example that fits this category is that detached house on the east side of Highview Avenue North which is quite distinctly different to its neighbours and described by a 21<sup>st</sup> century estate agents' magazine as - 'Bringing back the Bauhaus

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<sup>510</sup> BHBC fiche NB X1593/1

style.’ It was designed by one of Ferguson’s architectural team, S.B. Cathcart who later became deputy borough architect of Brighton.<sup>511</sup>



Fig 102

‘High Vu’ [sic] 8 Highview Avenue North.1934

Source: author’s own image 17.2.2008

Used as Patcham fire station in the Second World War.

Elsewhere in the conurbation Modernity appeared in a variety of forms, this aspect of the area’s architectural style has been covered extensively by Woodham, who noted -

‘As an aspiring progressive centre for leisure Brighton reflected something of this new spirit [Modernism] in retail outlets, apartment blocks, housing and hotels’.<sup>512</sup>

Antram and Morrice, though noting several examples of Modernism and Art Deco design in Brighton, particularly the commercial examples, stray no further into the suburbs surrounding the resort than to mention Saltdean Lido of this style.<sup>513</sup> Paradoxically Nairn and Pevsner writing over 40 years earlier in the precursor *Buildings of England* volume do acknowledge that Patcham existed and even added that it has ‘genteel bungalows’.<sup>514</sup> During the 1930s one of the most potent symbols of Modernism, and often seen as the stylistic and cultural opposite

<sup>511</sup> *Home Truths* June 2003 p13 , Sept 2003 p13

<sup>512</sup> Woodham p166

<sup>513</sup> Antram and Morrice p25-26

<sup>514</sup> Nairn and Pevsner p 458

of suburban semi-detached dwelling places, was the block of flats. A housing type that grew into prominence in the interwar period, generally regarded as an urban rather than a suburban form it was not uniformly well-regarded -

‘The flat, however luxurious, convenient or hotly defended against tactless visitors, is still regarded as a substitute for a house.’<sup>515</sup>

For those desirous of urban, rather than suburban styles of living, there were a series of luxury flatted schemes appearing across the area of Greater Brighton, mainly located along the seafront, from Marine Gate in the east, past Embassy Court on the borough boundary to Grand Avenue and Viceroy Lodge in Hove. Away from the shoreline, the 1930s saw Harewood House in Wilbury Rd erected along with the luxury apartments of Wick Hall and Furze Hill near St Anne’s Well Gardens. For those outside the world of – ‘Uniformed Porters and Optional Maid Service’<sup>516</sup> flats could mean the Brighton Council dwellings on Carlton Hill, the Kingswood Maisonettes and Milner Flats; developments described by Graham Greene in *Brighton Rock* and quite obviously lying outside of *Building Magazine*’s analysis for the rapid increase in flat construction -

‘Two main factors are influencing the change-over from unit house dwelling to the communal residential centre: the fluctuations of the incidence of local taxation, and the domestic servant shortage...’<sup>517</sup>

Some architects contrived to design low-rise flats so that they looked, superficially, like semi-detached houses.<sup>518</sup> These were found both in private and council developments, none of either in Patcham but the latter can be found in the East Brighton estate of North Moulsecoomb. There were however, interwar flats in suburban Patcham where they can be seen above the two shopping parades in Old London Road (fig 104). To complement the surge of housing a range of facilities were being provided by entrepreneurs and at the junction of Ladies Mile Road, two shopping parades appeared opposite each other in more than purely locational terms; The Elms Parade and the Brighton Co-op are respectively-in the terms of Osbert Lancaster, Neo-Tudor and Georgian Civic.

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<sup>515</sup> Myles-Wright (1937) *Small houses £500-£2,500* p7

<sup>516</sup> *BHH* 13.6.1936 p5

<sup>517</sup> *Building Magazine* July 1935 p438

<sup>518</sup> Stevenson J (2000) *The 1930s home* p12





Fig 103  
Old London Road

The Elms Parade  
1935

Patcham Co-op  
1935

Source: author's own images 11.5.2006

Tudorbethan and Moderne parades face one another across the Old London Road

By the mid-1930s there was a marked formality in the social structure of the twin boroughs which were a physical endorsement of Alderman Milner-Black's mayoral address of 1919, which described Brighton as 'a ragged garment with a golden fringe.'<sup>519</sup> The description still held true, albeit with some urban fringe adjustment, but the pattern of outer suburbia as a contrast with inner city deprivation, a pattern which developed rapidly during the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was seemingly set fair and the world of the 1930s suburb was still that of 'Downland Homes by the Sea'.

Building was slow to appear after the end of World War One, only commencing in 1922, but by 1939 almost all the housing in the core study area had been built, dramatically transforming the landscape from that of a depressed agriculture to one of 'classic' suburbia. In the Patcham core study area of 54 streets, 1623 homes were built in the years 1922-39 with 1513 built 1932-36, over 93%. Thus virtually the whole of the study area turned from agricultural land to built environment in four years. In the wider parish of Patcham over the same period 61% (2148 houses) of the interwar total (3536) were built in the same four years.<sup>520</sup> (charts 1 and 2). At the start of the period under review the new developments included cesspits and goat pens, asbestos roofs and chicken sheds, water was supplied from a

<sup>519</sup> *Sussex Daily News* 3.2.1919

<sup>520</sup> BHBC file cards

gutter and down-pipe from the corrugated iron roofs to a plain wooden water-butt; but by the completion of the Ladies Mile Estate in 1936, the final sales brochure could boast -

‘In this modern high class residential scheme provision is made for the full use of Electrical Services....it is fairly safe to say that in a few years ahead not many houses will be without electrical facilities.’<sup>521</sup>

This confident view of the electrical future was one that Ferguson obviously thought would project his estate as the last word in sophistication. From the ‘scattered squalor’ of the assorted huts to the promise of the ‘all-electric estate’ had taken Patcham a mere 12 years.

There were of course voices of disapproval to this rapid growth in the built environment both in the urban centre and out on the suburban fringe, the contemporary press carried letters and articles to this effect, an example being from S.P.B. Mais; in a letter headed ‘The invasion of ugliness’ he wrote -

‘The seaboard of Sussex is suffering from an invasion. These invaders are seeking after beauty, but, by a cruel irony, the beauty they seek only too often vanishes as the result of their presence. It is an invasion that we welcome, but it needs control....it is quite possible to house multitudes and yet preserve rural amenities, but it needs a sense of aesthetic fitness in architects and surveyors and a sense of public spirit in builders, that is not always present. One lapse into vulgarity or haphazard erection of cheap and nasty bungalows and a whole neighbourhood is ruined. Ugliness in building is contagious.’<sup>522</sup>

The local press carried a report by the Brighton Museum curator H.S. Toms on the loss of ancient ponds in Patcham, in particular the Eastwick Bottom pond on the fringe of LME -

‘Today great new towns as they seem have sprung into being and over what were rough Downland tracks or even virgin turf, the motor-bus now roars...[where] ancient folk watered their cattle...what would they make one wonders of the Braybon and Ferguson houses that today cover their ancient fields.’<sup>523</sup>

The campaigning publication the *Sussex County Magazine* carried an article in the May 1936 edition that recorded the change to the historic landscape. Toms noted -

‘Destruction of Eastwick Pond. Owing to road making in connection with adjacent building operations the filling in and obliteration of Eastwick Pond, commenced in ... May 1935, was completed during second week of the same month.’<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>521</sup> *Downland Homes* (c1936?) p20

<sup>522</sup> *BHH* 6.5.1933 p5

<sup>523</sup> *BHH* 4.8.1934 p13

<sup>524</sup> *SCM* v5n5 1936





Fig 104

Eastwick Pond 1875

Source: OS 6" (section)

Eastwick Barn survives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a barn conversion, the only discernible survivor from this 19<sup>th</sup> century map in an area, Eastwick Bottom, now the eastern end of Mackie Avenue and the Ladies Mile Estate.



Fig 105

Eastwick Pond

Source: author's own image 10.8.2004

Herbert Toms may have been surprised, and possibly gratified, that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the roundabout at the end of the cul-de-sac of Mackie Avenue, the most northerly urban fringe of Brighton and Hove, is still referred to by locals as 'the dewpond'. A folk memory in deepest suburbia.

The surge of building that saw 93% of the core area housing built in just 4 years can be seen as but one aspect of the wider picture of suburban expansion. The LME in particular can be seen as a prime example of the key themes of this thesis. It has been developed on land purchased in 1931 that had been part of the Kemp/Paine estates; its road layout and orientation was dictated by the shape and location of (initially) the Church Field and Barn Field; its building styles were of its period, the 1930s, rather than of its near neighbours which had grown in the previous decade. As the suburb developed the raw nature of the early estate, noted in Mrs Gravett's tale of a sheep flock in her garden, was replaced by 'Tudorbethan' shopping parades, tennis courts and the Ladies Mile Hotel. Noting these features and their evolution, understanding the processes behind the changes, allows a degree of perspective to be given to the suburban scene. The hedge that separated the Abergavenny land from Paine land recorded on a 1750 map, is the same line that becomes Baranscraig Avenue in 1934, the southward continuation separates the Mackie sports ground from the public open space, forms the eastern boundary of the White House garden, and further south still, it separates the Sunnydale Estate from its western neighbours. One landscape feature that exhibits continuity and change, creates diversity, exhibits a lifecycle of its own and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century gives a sense of perspective to the supposed anonymity of the suburb.

The landscape of Patcham was undergoing great change, as the loss of ancient features noted above indicates, but it was the built environment, the semi-detached houses and bungalows, the shopping parades and new leisure facilities which exhibited the greatest change in the appearance of the area; a suite of styles that encapsulated the interwar suburb in the public consciousness. It is that manifestation that the following chapter addresses.

## Chapter 7

## Suburban styles - exteriors

*'The ornamental brickwork of the house elevations provides a pleasant change from the multitude of imitation Tudor mansionettes.'*

(Braybon press advertisement BHH 1934)<sup>525</sup>

**Fine for a holiday — Ideal for  
a HOME!**

The finest selection  
of Modern Homes in  
HOVE, BRIGHTON  
AND DISTRICT

WHETHER you prefer a main road  
or a downland situation, Braybons  
can satisfy you. In Hove, With-  
dean, Brighton, Shoreham, Lancing and  
Worthing, Braybons estates are notice-  
able for their excellent planning, con-  
venient situations and moderate prices.

All types from £525 to £1,675 are  
being erected. In a large number the  
bedrooms are fitted with constant hot  
water.

Only an hour from London, Brighton,  
Hove and the electrified area to the  
west makes an ideal home for the business  
man or for retirement.

HOUSES FROM  
**£525 to £1,675**  
FREEHOLD  
**£25 Down 13/- Weekly**

Full particulars may be obtained on any  
estate or from Braybons' Central Office

Claxton Advertising (Brighton) Ltd.



**BRAYBONS**  
Prince's House, North St.  
Brighton

84

Fig 106  
Braybons advertisement  
Source: Hove Guide 1936

The 'Modern Homes' of the builder's advertisement were a product of the changing styles of domestic architecture that had evolved from the mid-nineteenth century.

<sup>525</sup> BHH 1.9.1934 p13

During the 1920s the suburban styles were indicative of their particular heritage; individual developers working at a small scale or single dwellings built to an owner's specification from an architect's plan, gave a suburban appearance of a myriad housing types and styles, all set on an urban fringe which often lacked the basic requirements of sewers, retail facilities and in many cases, paved roads. This chapter looks at the changes that the advent of larger developers brought into the local market and landscape.

Each of the key texts outlined in chapter two brings a different perspective to the history of suburban housing; examples of each aspect can be seen in the Patcham area. Hardy and Ward's '*Arcadia for all*' plotland structures, a key stage in the suburban landscape, are still recognisable at the Braepool site, a couple survive on Sweet Hill, and samples can be found along the south side of Ladies Mile Road and Warmdean Road, good examples of the style; former 'hutments' greatly enhanced into a variant form. King's *Bungalow* appears across the area in detached and semi-detached form, a range of types from plotland 'pioneer' styles through Sunburst doors and Crittalls windows of the Ladies Mile Estate. Oliver et al's '*Dunroamin*' illustrates the landscape of the corporate estates, half-timbered in the Carden Avenue Estate, Moderne in LME and elaborately brick-worked in Old Mill.

The Patcham suburbs provide a sampler book of the variety of house styles that have come to epitomise the interwar landscape of the urban fringe and provide a set of images that convey a particular time and location that still has a meaning in the 21st century. These are the product of earlier architectural developments that had filtered down from individual structures of architectural distinctiveness, through a network of lesser architects and smaller builders, to the self-build and hybrid styles of the plotlands in the immediate post-First World War landscape, and from there to the mass 1930's housing market. The variety of housing styles that came to represent the popular image of the suburb, have their origins in the work of that collection of architects, who, in the 19th century redefined the landscape of domestic buildings in the UK. Collectively their work left a legacy of roughcast and timber, tile-hanging and diamond-pane windows, pebbledash and stained glass doorways; all this alongside dwellings with 'Sunburst' doors and gates, metal framed 'Suntrap' windows, tubular steel balconies, angular exteriors and white rendered facades; buildings that according



to Brett - ‘...arrived in a blaze of glory and after a brief summer of astonishing beauty, faded like a flower in the frost.’<sup>526</sup>



Rhos-on-Sea, Conwy



Caes Gwyn, Caernarfon



69-71 Mackie Avenue, Patcham



103-105 Mackie Avenue, Patcham

Fig 107

Suburban style comparisons

Source: author's own images

Wales 28.4.2006

Patcham 10.8.2004

Locations as far apart as Patcham and the North Wales coast show a similarity of design. There was a significant decrease in the regionality of architectural styles as more uniform designs spread across the United Kingdom, leaving little difference to suburban housing over 300 miles apart

<sup>446</sup> Brett L (1947) *The things we see: houses* p37

Of the main defining features of the interwar suburb one was the appearance of the single structure and secondly, where collected, the estate layout. The widespread adoption of two basic architectural styles, defined in their narrowest terms as ‘huts and machines’, led to a situation whereby the geographical distinctiveness of local styles blended into ubiquitous designs which could be discerned across the country. The design volumes and trade journals of the interwar period show that wherever building was taking place there were few clues as to the regionality of the design and as the examples in fig 108 show; there was little variation in these from locations far apart.

## 7.1

### Suburban style - origins

*‘The Englishman builds his house for himself alone. He feels no urge to impress...’*<sup>527</sup>  
(Muthesius 1904)



Fig 108  
54-52 Vale Avenue, Ladies Mile Estate, Patcham  
Source: author's own image 4.7.2009

*‘...no urge to impress...’*  
‘Building permission granted 29th March 1932. Architect B.W.Billinge’<sup>528</sup>

<sup>527</sup> Muthesius H (1904) *Das Englische Haus* p10

<sup>528</sup> BHBC NB 8936



The recognizable collection of styles that constitute British interwar architecture has as its genesis the work of a body of mainly 19th century architects whose styles and use of materials moved the appearance of mass domestic housing structures from the terraces of bye-law housing, prevalent in the later 19th century, to that ubiquitous suburban form, the semi-detached dwelling. Linking these architectural forms to the development of the Garden City movement and its junior form the Garden Suburb, themselves products of a growing awareness of town planning, all contrived to produce the built environment of interwar Britain, one that survives into the 21st century as a highly recognizable landscape.



Fig 109

Sussex vernacular styles

Source: author's own images

24.11.2006/ 21.11.2008/ 25.5.2009/ 18.4.2007

Clockwise from top-

Little East St, Brighton, flint beach cobbles

Preston Road, Preston, Brighton. Knapped field flints

Old Place, Lindfield, West Sussex. Horsham Stone and oak timber.

Station Road, Plumpton Green, East Sussex. Weald Clay brick and terracotta

The line of descent to the suburban semi can be seen as emanating partly from the richly diverse regional styles of the English vernacular, where the ubiquity of building materials, their low unit value and difficulty of movement ensured that there was a clearly defined regionality even within a small geographical area. Thus in Sussex, from the Channel coast at Brighton, inland to the High Weald at Lindfield, a journey of 15 miles would reveal a succession of varying styles and building materials regulated largely by the geological make-up of each area. The beach cobble flints utilised in the Old Town of Brighton give way in a couple of miles to the field flints of Preston and Patcham; northwards these in turn give way to the bright red brick of the Weald Clay, formerly manufactured locally in Plumpton Green and Burgess Hill. The end of the short peregrination at Lindfield brings the products of the High Weald into the continuum, Horsham Stone roofs, Ardingly Sandstone and Grinstead Clay brick-built lower courses, oak timbers hung with clay tiles forming the upper floor (fig 110). It was this intense regionally delineated mix of materials and styles that is the quintessence of the English vernacular, and one that was drawn on heavily by the Victorian designers and architects who left their mark on housing appearance over the succeeding century, when the vernacular gave way to the generality of the suburb.

The design excesses of the mid-19th century outlined by Pevsner in 'Pioneers of Modern Design' led to the crusade against the materialism and ugliness of Victorian England by William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites. Ironically, Morris commented -

'I was born at Walthamstow...a suburban village on the edge of Epping Forest and once a pleasant enough place, but now terribly cockneyfied and choked up by the jerry-builder.'<sup>529</sup>

The pantheon of British Victorian architects is diverse, the sheer amount of wealth generated by the hub of Empire ensured there was work a-plenty in providing the industrial and financial barons of the age with suitably imposing houses, particularly in southeast England; Philip Webb was commissioned by the wealthy London solicitor James Beale, to build Standen; Beale had simple tastes as a Unitarian, with no desire, in the depressed agricultural economy of 1890s Sussex, for a country estate, his requirement was for -

'...a house in the country, rather than a traditional country house.'<sup>530</sup>

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<sup>529</sup> Tames R (1972) *William Morris. An illustrated life 1834 1896* p5

<sup>530</sup> Garnett O(1993) *Standen* p17

Webb's style, using gables, tile-hanging and red brick, was one that was to be endlessly repeated in suburban styles the length and breadth of the country and one that appealed to a British aesthetic. Comparison with Stocklands Farm at Hadlow Down, East Sussex, a farmhouse with 15th century origins, confirms that statement.<sup>531</sup> The influence of the southeast vernacular on the architectural styles of the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is clear, but the example provided previously, Standen and a host of similarly commissioned properties, were for the highest echelons of imperial wealth creation.



Fig 110  
Stocklands Farm, Hadlow Down, East Sussex  
Source: author's own image 22.5.2004

An agricultural dwelling, originating in the fifteenth century, where can be seen the starting point for many of the features of 21st century suburbia.

These largely country houses were the inspiration for an army of smaller, cheaper and less aesthetically pleasing properties than their progenitors. Tapping into a British love of the historic rather than the modern, the work of a band of architects working at the end of the 19th century was to become the blueprint for hundreds of thousands of suburban dwellings. Descending through a succession of local building firms and small town architectural practices, the vernacular tradition became diluted and in some instances lost, to an amalgam of readily obtainable and easily transported building products; the styles spread from

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<sup>531</sup> Spencer pers.comm.22.5.2004

commercial grandees and city financiers, to the managerial classes of provincial towns and descended to the new row building on the urban fringes, which at Patcham were the homes of railway engineers, sawmill foremen, laundry workers and poultry farmers. Detail might be lost, scale reduced and materials replaced, yet almost any British suburb can offer up structures whose appearance can be ascribed to have the architectural styles, if not the quality, of for example, Norman-Shaw and CFA Voysey. Indeed 'Voysey-esque' is still a term employed by estate agents to denote a certain design style, although few that receive that appellation have the essential qualities that Voysey himself listed -

'Repose, Cheerfulness, Simplicity, Breadth, Warmth, Quietness in a storm, Economy of upkeep, Evidence of Protection, Harmony with surroundings.'<sup>532</sup>

The white roughcast and lattice windows of Voysey, gaze out still from crescents and drives, across Britain; Osbert Lancaster gave the term 'Stockbrokers Tudor' to these styles, his illustrations in *Pillar to Post* suggest an upper middle-class nature to the term. The adoption of these 'faux-styles' brought some caustic comment from architectural critics, foremost being Osbert Lancaster himself writing in 1938 -

'...so deep and so widespread was the post-war devotion to the olde-worlde that an enormous number of such houses were erected, at considerable expense and the greatest ingenuity was displayed in providing the various modern devices with which they were anachronistically equipped with suitable olde-worlde disguises. Thus electrically produced heat warmed the hands of those who clustered enthusiastically round the Yule-logs blazing so prettily in the vast hearth; ...'<sup>533</sup>

The architecture that so influenced the materials and designs of suburbs throughout the UK is part of a larger process; Mandler observed -

'Nostalgic, deferential and rural Englishness ... squire-archival village of southern or 'deep' England as the template on which the national character had been formed ... the ideal towards which it must inevitably return.'<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> Brandon-Jones J (1978) *CFA Voysey: architect and designer 1857-1941* p19

<sup>533</sup> Lancaster O (1938) *Pillar to Post* p62

<sup>534</sup> Mandler P (1997) "'Against Englishness": English culture and the limits to rural nostalgia 1850-1940' p155



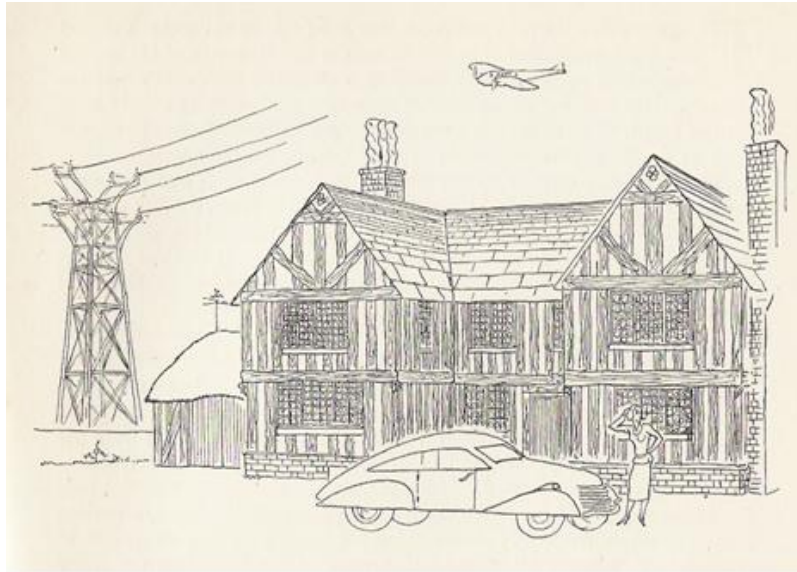


Fig 111

'Stockbrokers Tudor',<sup>535</sup>

Source: Osbert Lancaster

The epitome of the duality in much interwar design; the thatched garage and half timbering juxtaposed with streamlined car, electricity pylon and aeroplane.



Fig 112

'Wimbledon Transitional',<sup>536</sup>

Source: Osbert Lancaster

<sup>535</sup> Lancaster p63

<sup>536</sup> Lancaster p61



Fig 113  
10-11 Winfield Avenue, Patcham.1928  
'Patcham Transitional'  
Source: author's own image 7.2.2004

Fig 113 shows Lancaster's description can still be encountered in the avenues of Patcham. He noted the detail of domestic architecture exemplified by his classic interwar cartoon sketches, in suburban situations. Lancaster thought that at the time of its inception, Wimbledon Transitional was -

'...a fiendish variety of surface materials(frequently one finds pebbledash, ridge tiling, fancy brickwork, weather-boarding, and half-timbering all employed on the outside walls of the same building)...essentially an upper-class style and attained its finest development in the £1,500-£2,000 a year districts of ... the South Coast. It is still possible to find many splendid examples in these neighbourhoods ...'<sup>537</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Lancaster p60



## 7.2

## The diverse suburb.

*'From the house beautiful to the suburb salubrious'* <sup>538</sup>

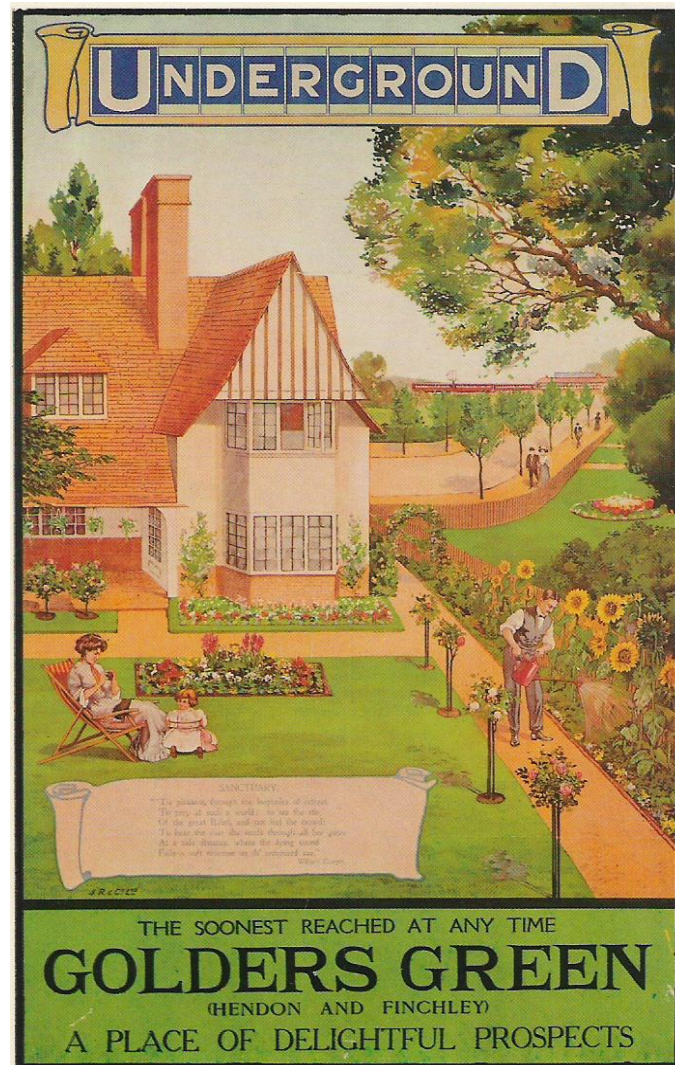


Fig 114

*'Golders Green... a place of delightful prospects.'* <sup>539</sup>

Source: London Transport 1908

© TfL from London Transport Museum collection

In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the national economy was producing a growing middle class with aspirations to improve their lot, especially in terms of their housing need. With improvements in transport technologies and commensurate improvements in travel times and costs there was an awareness that housing could break the bounds of the city and that the

<sup>538</sup> Aslet C and Powers A (1985) *Book of the English house* p220

<sup>539</sup> Bownes G & Green O (eds) (2008) *London Transport posters: a century of art and design* p111

urban fringe and beyond could be colonised in new dwellings that aped the appearance of the original rural structures. This is seen to advantage in the 1908 poster for the ‘place of delightful prospects’ - Golders Green. Here can be seen the embodiment of suburban architecture, an Arts and Crafts house influenced by Norman Shaw, that can be readily observed over a century later. Domestic bliss is seen in mother winding wool with baby, while father [replete in bow-tie] waters the sumptuous garden. In the background the London suburban progenitor, the red underground train, has long left the subterranean metropolis. John Betjeman’s TV film, *Metro-land*, captured the essence of that suburban area, borrowing a term from the eponymous publicity book of the Metropolitan Railway, originally published in 1915 and thence annually until 1932. That slim volume captures in its photography and in advertisements for building societies and flowery developers’ prose, the essence of that district in the Home Counties that was undergoing such rapid change.

**GLEBE ESTATE. ROXBOROUGH ESTATE.  
HOOKING GREEN ESTATE.**



**S**EMI-DETACHED Brick-Built Villas on this Estate, ideally situated within 3 minutes of North Harrow, 5 minutes West Harrow Stations. Train journey about 16 minutes Baker Street or Marylebone.

3 Bedroom Semi Det. Houses from **£750 to £875.**  
4 " " " " **£950 " £1050.**

**REPAYMENTS AS RENT.**


Over 12 Years	19s. 11d.	per Month for each
" 15 "	17s. 5d.	" £100 advanced.

Ordinary Mortgages arranged. Repayment £12 10s. per quarter, plus interest. £200 down, balance as rent.  
Electric Light, Large Gardens, Pinner Parish, Decorations to suit Purchasers. Rates 8s. in the £ per year.

**A. CUTLER, Builder,**  
Estate Office, Pinner Road, North Harrow.  
Phone—HATTON 199.

SEE YOU SAW IT IN "METROLAND."  
112

**Park Lane Estate, Wembley Park**



SITUATED ON PARK LANE ESTATE.

**W**HYY NOT live in the bracing air and rural delights of this beautiful and healthy suburb. This charming Residential Estate—nearly 200 feet above sea level—gives extensive views of a well-wooded and gently undulating countryside and adjoins Wembley's beautiful Public Park. The Park Lane Estate is planned and developed on the best Garden Suburb lines, with semi-detached Houses to suit all tastes and requirements.

3 Bedroom Houses from **£750 to £1,000**  
4 " " " " **£1,100 " £1,250**

**FREERHOLD or LEASEHOLD.** Semi-detached with facilities for Garage.  
*Special Points:* Sound Construction, Perfect Sanitation, Pleasing Design, Artistic Decoration.

Over 1,000 of these Houses built and sold by us at Wembley. Close to Golf Links and Tennis Courts. Low Rates, 9s. per ann. Mortgages arranged if required. Five minutes from Wembley Park Station (Metro, Ry.). Cheap Season Tickets.

**COMBEN & WAKELING,**  
TRADESMEN: 100-7 WEMBLEY. 52 Park Lane, Wembley Hill.

SEE YOU SAW IT IN "METROLAND."  
113

Fig 115  
Metroland 1924<sup>540</sup>  
Source: Metropolitan Railway

<sup>540</sup> *Metroland* 1924 p112-113

The illustrations of the Metro-land communities show them barely as suburbs, but still as rustic agricultural districts on the cusp of urbanisation, a lure that Betjeman was to comment, write and broadcast on for many years, observing through his poetry the fine detail of suburban design and lifestyles. The illustrations of the new suburban dwellings are the quintessence of a style that Lancaster denoted in 'Pillar to Post' as 'by-pass variegated'; Lancaster's keenly observed suburban scene shows semi-detached and detached dwellings, with varying designs and materials, on a bus route, and individual personalised gardens entered by Sunburst gates, the houses entered by classic 'keyhole' doorways.

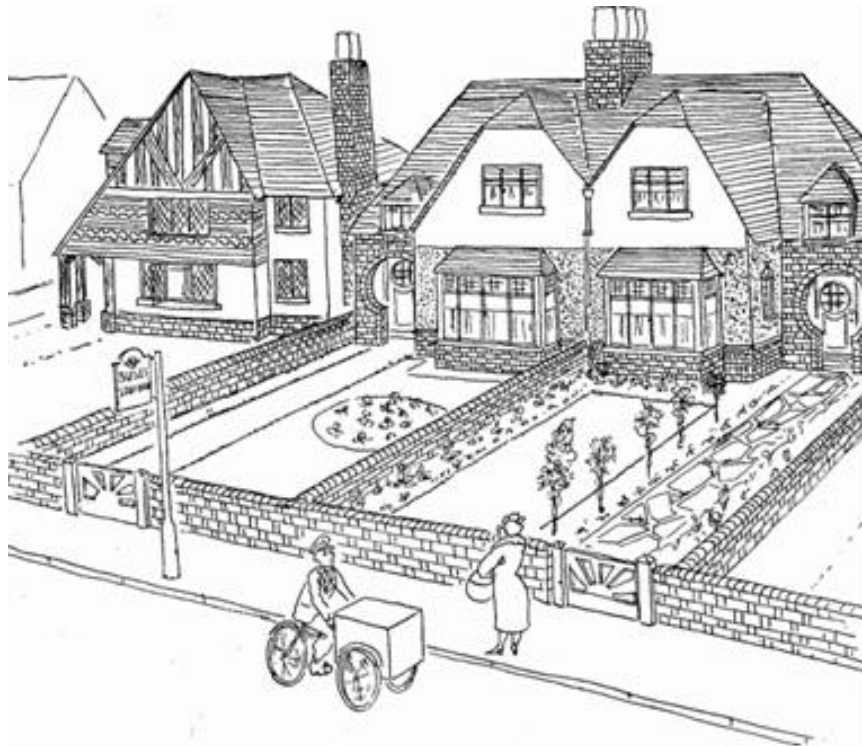


Fig 116  
'By-pass variegated'<sup>541</sup>  
Source: Osbert Lancaster

The suburb has seen a variety of styles owing their derivation to the work of a large body of largely 19<sup>th</sup> century architects, however by the end of the 1920s there was appearing on new building projects across the country an advance party of much more radical structures, emanating from the work of Continental architects such as Jeanneret-Gris (Le Corbusier) Behrens, Gropius and Lubetkin.<sup>542</sup> Flat roofed, white Cubist buildings inspired by advocates

<sup>541</sup> Lancaster p 69

<sup>542</sup> Tietz J (1999) *The story of architecture of the 20<sup>th</sup> century* p117

of the new social orders appearing on the Continent, a style, and its architects ultimately driven to the UK by the rise of the totalitarian regimes growing in Europe. The major buildings in this Continental style were, like any invasion, attacking the established architectural order on many fronts, initially the south and east coasts and the capital city, but also in isolated rural districts where their appearance was in direct contrast to the vernacular tradition emanating from rustic origins.

The Modern Movement was not one that found a natural home in British suburbia though there are examples there of its brief flowering. Powers has described Modernism as being of the margins and it can be argued that while suburbs are marginal to the city, so the South East coast is marginal to Great Britain. Powers outlined the main areas of support both physically and intellectually for the movement -

‘Three kinds of marginality are significant. First geographic...the main concentrations of Modernist buildings was in the south-east of England...linked at times to geography is the notion of stylistic margin, for architects based outside London tended to make their own rules about what they wanted Modern to be...the second margin is gender. The 1930s was the first decade in the history of British architecture in which women made a major contribution, beginning with the unsurpassed feat of Elisabeth Scott in winning the competition for the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon...finally there are building types and works by individual designers that have failed to survive...in many cases these buildings were created for industries.’<sup>543</sup>

Powers traces the inception of the British Modern Movement, clearly from Voysey, Baillie-Scott and Lutyens, stating -

‘The aesthetic issues of Modernism did not stand in isolation, and in this it tried to follow the morality of the Arts and Crafts movement in avoiding a split between outward appearance and inner structural truth.’<sup>544</sup>

Modern Movement buildings were appearing along the Sussex coastline, notably the De La Warr Pavilion at Bexhill by Chermayeff and Mendelsohn, Embassy Court at Brighton by Wells-Coates, Shoreham airport terminal by Stavers Tiltman and the Lido at Saltdean by Richard Jones. These are all iconic of the Modern Movement and of the time itself; the exhibition in 1999 by the Design Museum - ‘*Modern Britain 1929-1939*’ featured as the cover of the catalogue, a night-time photograph of the De la Warr south front stairway. There were, and are, some buildings less well known but of no lesser note in quiet seaside estates, and some set, albeit austere, in rural parts, as is Chermayeff’s Bentley Wood, Halland, East

<sup>543</sup> Powers A (2005) *Modern: the Modern Movement in Britain* p9

<sup>544</sup> Powers p 11



Sussex ; a structure that Dawe and Powell describe as exemplifying - ‘...modern architecture...achieving a new maturity in the years before the war.’<sup>545</sup>



De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill 1935  
Source: De La Warr Pavilion



Embassy Court, Brighton 1935  
Source: Builder magazine



Brighton, Hove & Worthing Airport terminal 1936  
Source: Shoreham Airport



Saltdean Lido, Brighton [1938]  
Source: author's own image 14.3.2010

Fig 117

The Modern Movement on the South Coast.

*‘...the main concentration of Modernist buildings was in the south-east of England...linked at times to geography is the notion of stylistic margin...’*<sup>546</sup>

The high ideals of the masters of the Modern Movement were much watered down by the time they arrived in the urban fringe, although there are some examples of suburban dwellings that are part of the Modern pantheon, notably the houses by Connell, Ward and

<sup>545</sup> Dawe N and Powell K (2001) *The modern house today* p186

<sup>546</sup> Powers p9

Lucas at Saltdean on Brighton's eastern fringe 1934, noted by Nairn and Pevsner as then costing £550.<sup>547</sup>



Fig 118  
 'Modern-on-Sea'  
 Seaside Modern Movement at Wicklands Avenue, Saltdean, Brighton.  
 Source: M. Briggs<sup>548</sup>  
*'...forlorn amongst their conformist brothers...'*<sup>549</sup>

The buildings seem at odds with the sheep-fold wattles edging the plot; it is indicative of the duality of much of suburbia, where the new landscapes were not only betwixt and between urban and rural but were between the past and the future.

The Saltdean collection is a rare example of 'pure' Modernism in the suburb, more frequently the buildings would resemble those found on the secluded Beachlands Estate - in reality a marshland estate- at Norman's Bay, East Sussex (fig120) charming in themselves, but pale imitations of the source structures, as Carter observed -

*'...it is a matter of opinion whether the construction of flat roofs has yet reached perfection...'*<sup>550</sup>

A sub-species of this already hybrid style they designated 'Hollywood Moderne', a form given free reign in the final phase of Ferguson's Ladies Mile Estate in 1935. The suburban answer to the Modern Movement was a classic British compromise, with a style denoted as

<sup>547</sup> Nairn and Pevsner p601

<sup>548</sup> Briggs M (1943) *Building today* p15

<sup>549</sup> Nairn & Pevsner p601

<sup>550</sup> Carter E (ed)(1937) *Seaside houses and bungalows* p17



‘Moderne’ which Barrett and Phillips describe as -

‘Perhaps in response to the continuing criticism of this (vernacular style) housing by the architectural profession ...some developers built homes based on the International Style, many examples of which had been built in Europe in the 1920s. Thus small pockets of ‘Moderne’ or suntrap housing...sprang up in the suburbs...’<sup>551</sup>



Fig 119  
127-129 Braeside Avenue, Patcham.  
Source: author's own image 10.8.2004

Building permission granted 20 August 1935<sup>552</sup>

*‘Hollywood Moderne...elements of the style included white rendering and a pan-tiled roof in either green...or blue.’*<sup>553</sup>

<sup>551</sup> Barrett H and Phillips J (1987) *Suburban style: the British home 1840-1960* p 131

<sup>552</sup> BHBC file cards

<sup>553</sup> Barrett & Phillips p135



Fig 120  
‘Moderne-on-Sea’ The modified Modern Movement.  
Two examples, Beachlands Estate, Norman’s Bay, East Sussex  
Source: Author’s own images 1.5.2008

## 7.3

## The Style of the Suburb

*‘The external appearance of any building is subject to the approval of the Council...’*  
 (Town and Country Planning Act 1932 clause 45) <sup>554</sup>



Fig 121  
 114 Mackie Avenue, Patcham  
 Source: author's own image 10.8.2004

*‘Suburbia has good claim to be the locus of twentieth century modernity...’* <sup>555</sup>

This statement by Gilbert and Preston was expanded by Silverstone, who further drew attention to the fact that while most accounts of modernity have given central place to the urban, for millions of people -

*‘...the experience of modernity was the evidence not of the street, but of the road, not the sidewalk but the lawn, and not the jarring and unpredictable visibility of public spaces and public transport, but the enclosed private worlds of fences, parlours and automobiles.’* <sup>556</sup>

Suburbia has become entwined with the notion of national identity over the course of the

<sup>554</sup> Howkins F p113

<sup>555</sup> Gilbert & Preston p187

<sup>556</sup> Silverstone R (1997) *Visions of suburbia* p5



twentieth century as noted above by Gilbert and Preston, who further saw this built form as being a notion of Englishness, a relationship that sits uneasily in the national psyche where there is a dualism between love and loathing in relation to the suburb, a concept splendidly portrayed by the Grossmiths' Mr Pooter in 19<sup>th</sup> century Holloway, through George Bowley in Orwell's stifling community of interwar Lower Binfield, to Hancock's 1950s East Cheam and Reggie Perrin's 1970s Surbiton; Iain Sinclair's *London Orbital* takes this duality into the 21<sup>st</sup> century where he looks askance at the multi-faceted suburban landscape. Suburbia is at one and the same time seen as all that is good, secure and stable in English society whilst also being indicative of - '...an increasingly emasculated space...dominated by the humdrum petty demands of everyday life.'<sup>557</sup>



Fig 122

The contradiction in the 1920s home, radio and medieval armour.

Source: Amplion radio magazine 1927

'...why do we live in a half-baked pageant?'<sup>558</sup>

<sup>557</sup> Gilbert and Preston p191

<sup>558</sup> Gloag (in Gloag (ed)(1934) *Design in Modern Life*) p19-20

Attempts to break out from this safe state were made by a range of critics; Osbert Lancaster castigated the world of electric ‘log’ fires in suburban drawing rooms and of electric ‘horn’ lanterns on fake half-timbered suburban frontages. Gloag writing in 1934 in ‘Design in Modern Life’ opened his critical volume with a chapter ‘Who knows what the public wants?’ taking a similar line to Lancaster -

‘Why are you...living in an imitation Tudor house with stained wooden slats shoved on to the front of it to make it look like a half-timbered house...why has the petrol pump got a mock Tudor canopy shoved over the top of it?...why do we live in a half-baked pageant...?’<sup>559</sup>

and Evelyn Waugh made the point that -

‘It is inevitable that English taste, confronted with all these frightful menaces to its integrity, should have adopted an uncompromising attitude to anything the least tainted with ye oldeness.’<sup>560</sup>

The sales brochures for the suburban estates of the 1930s are a good example of one particular aspect of suburban culture and design, whereby the nostalgia for the past which is evident in the design pattern books of the period, is seen in tandem with the yearning for the ease of life and perceived ‘glamour’ of the modern; often in the form of Continental design features, the style that may be designated ‘suburban exotic’. Woodham has detailed this approach for the Brighton area in a paper for *Southern History*; in ‘The reality of historical heritage’<sup>561</sup> the notion of the historical pageant as a signifier of the design duality is employed, a concept noted earlier by Gloag<sup>562</sup>. The occasion of ‘Empire Shopping Week’ in 1927 gave the opportunity for a full range of historical solecisms to be displayed for public consumption, it also showed the extent that the resort hierarchy was employed, with Lady Cooper Rawson the wife of the lately ennobled local MP cast as Britannia, and the principal speaker at the accompanying banquet being Leo Amery, Secretary of State for the Dominion Affairs and the Colonies [Amery’s son Julian became MP for Brighton Pavilion 1969-92]. The following year The Pageant of Brighton was played out placing Brighton at the centre of national historical events, including transposing Drake’s pre-Armada bowls match from Plymouth Hoe to Brighton seafront.<sup>563</sup> This move from Britannia to Drake was one observed

<sup>559</sup> Gloag (in Gloag (ed) (1934) p19-20)

<sup>560</sup> Waugh E (1930) *Labels: a Mediterranean journal* p46

<sup>561</sup> Anon (1999) *Sussex Club Bicentenary handbook* p183; Woodham p156

<sup>562</sup> Gloag p20

<sup>563</sup> Woodham p156-157



by Mandler who saw it as a general move from the insularity of England to a wider perspective of worldwide horizons in a period of expansive Empire - 'Merrie England ...superseded by homilies on the manly exploits of Drake and Raleigh.'<sup>564</sup>

It was this muddying of myth and historical fact into a 20th century setting that was the background to the suburban design confusion. The Armada was a theme of design that was never far from much of interwar suburbia, and the popular artist Sir Frank Brangwyn, who lived at Ditchling a scant four miles from Patcham, was a prime exponent of the triumphalist style of painting, where brave corsairs in galleons sailed the Spanish Main and Elizabethan adventurers explored the 'Seven Seas'. This imagery appeared in stained glass panels in porches and front doors, on fireplace implements, and in the design of retail advertising. Oliver et al cover the topic in some detail -

'A sailing ship with a massive sail and one or two masts was customary... symbolism...required that the ship was sailing towards the viewer, full canvas spread. Whether the boat was embarking on a new venture or sailing into port was not clear; the owner could project himself into either interpretation of the scene. Essentially the ship carried himself and his family and for this reason it was important that he should not feel it was sailing away from him.'<sup>565</sup>



Fig 123  
Galleon panels, front door, 9 The Cliff, Roedean, East Brighton  
Source: author's own image 30.1.2009

*'...stained glass essays set in front doors, porches, or landing windows...'*<sup>566</sup>

<sup>564</sup> Mandler p161

<sup>565</sup> Oliver.P, Davis I, Bentley I p165

<sup>566</sup> Woodham p162

Cox and Barnard, a long established Hove firm of stained glaziers, exhibits the dichotomy, not just in its manufactures, but in its advertising illustration. They have employed a wide range of typefaces from Gothic to Modern in their advertisement emphasising the design confusion, the image shows the view through the traditionally drawn leaded light window to a stylised 1930s 'sunburst'. The 'bullion' in the middle strip of glazing is another feature that conflated the 'historic' into the 20th century. A 1939 catalogue page 'Landscape and Seascape scenes in rich variegated glass' noted that while standard designs were priced at - '7/- (35p) per ft. super', bullions were extra. Stevenson noted a feature that can be seen in fig 127, design 367 -

'Some new leaded window lights were made with contrived 'repairs' to try and add a feeling of authenticity to pseudo-historical properties.'<sup>567</sup>



Fig 124  
Cox & Barnard advertisement 1934  
Source: Kelly's Directory, Brighton

Lower middle-class semi-detached housing on the Ladies Mile Estate had less artistic licence than the upper middle-class detached dwellings in Roedean, their more restrained designs had their origin in the Arts and Crafts movement which -

'...owe their inspiration to the...craftsmen of the turn of the century, who advocated that the lead itself be used to form the pattern, rather than merely to hold patterned glass as in Victorian windows.'<sup>568</sup>

<sup>567</sup> Stevenson p27



Fig 125  
 Stained glass galleon window panel  
 Source: Better Homes & Gardens

*'...sails billowing in full, pregnant shapes, the galleon...rode high on a tumbling sea.'*<sup>569</sup>

<sup>568</sup> Barrett and Phillips p 166

<sup>569</sup> Oliver et al p165





Design No. L.L. 367  
Price, 7/- per ft. super.



Design No. L.L. 368  
Price, 7/- per ft. super.  
(Bullions extra)



Design No. L.L. 369

Price, 8/6 per ft. super.

Landscape and Seascape Scenes, all worked in Rich Variegated Glass

Fig 126  
Leaded lights catalogue 1939 (note Bullions extra charge in design 368) <sup>570</sup>  
Source: Barrett & Phillips

<sup>570</sup> Barrett & Phillips p167



Sunburst radio set  
Source: Countryman magazine 1938



Sunray distemper  
Source: Brighton & Hove Herald 1931



"Painting the clouds with sunshine" 1929  
Source: author's collection <sup>571</sup>





The addition of the 'sunburst' in the background of the Cox and Barnard illustration was a nod to modernism, as Cranfield noted - 'The British obsession with the sun did, however, leave its mark in the ubiquitous sunburst motif.'<sup>573</sup> Thus giving an acknowledgement of the period's love of that particular symbol, not just in stained glass, but the frontages of radio sets which were adorned with sun rays cut into the cover as a fretwork design, gates, front doors, glazed panels, gable-ends, and much interior décor and materials, all reflected in the theme.



Fig 128  
'Sunbursts'

16 Thornhill Avenue LME. 1934      10 Sanyhills Avenue LME. 1933<sup>574</sup>

Source: authors own images 28.3.2009 / 6.12.2008

The architects' plans held on microfiche at Brighton and Hove Building Control show much of the original building detail for the Patcham area, including -

'Type D' two bedroom semi-detached bungalows, 4-26 Thornhill Avenue...Sunburst doors. 26.7.1934.'<sup>575</sup>

The curved porch, surrounding the Thornhill Avenue sunburst, so typical of its period,

<sup>573</sup> Cranfield I (2001) *Art Deco house style* p72

<sup>574</sup> BHBC NB 9381

<sup>575</sup> BHBC NB 9771/1

has a tile motif further representing the sun, also discerned in the Hollywood Moderne of fig 119 in nearby Braeside Avenue. Wooden Sunburst gates have survived the elements less well and there are but a few examples surviving, one such is in nearby Sanyhills Avenue fig 128.



Brighton & Hove Herald offices  
Built 1935 (2012 All Bar None)



Citizens Permanent Building Society  
Built 1934 (2012 Allied Irish bank)



Hillside, Moulescoomb Garden Suburb  
Built 1925



Manor Farm Estate, Whitehawk.  
Built 1932

Fig 129

Neo-Georgian Brighton, commercial and domestic.

Source: author's own images

28.4.2007 / 8.3.2007 / 19.12.2008 / 1.5.2008

*'...the modernising face of historicism...'*

Woodham saw an alternative in the local architectural and design themes of Brighton with the development of a Neo-Georgian style. This was described as -

'The modernising face of historicism...the acceptable face of modernism...which found considerable favour in interwar Brighton.'<sup>576</sup>

<sup>576</sup> Woodham p162

This was a utilitarian form that manifested itself both in the commercial structures of the urban centre and out in the far suburbs, where it is the over-riding style of the Moulsecoomb and Whitehawk council estates. Clayton and Black, a firm of architects who produced much of Brighton's distinctive interwar commercial buildings were among the consulting architects of the South Moulsecoomb Garden Suburb.<sup>577</sup> The public house of the era was a good example of the historical melange that was characteristic of the era and one Brighton building that personifies the duality of nostalgia and modernism is the King and Queen pub in Marlborough Place. It has all the glamour and style of the Thirties roadhouse and might be seen to be out of place in central Brighton, rather than out on a by-pass or suburban estate. The King and Queen is a cornucopia of fakery, big and bold, it boasts a portcullis, minstrels galleries, stained glass panels, oak panelling, wrought-iron grilles, half-timbering, carved stone lintels and heraldic devices - '...amid the pomp and pageantry of Tudorism...' <sup>578</sup> A meet companion to galleon door panels in suburban porches.



King & Queen, Marlborough Place

1935



Black Lion Hotel, London Road, Patcham

1928

Fig 130

'Ye Olde English' style in public house design

Source: author's own images 8.3.2007 / 11.5.2006

In Patcham its place is taken by the Black Lion Hotel, an interwar roadhouse of similar Mock Tudor features, a suburban counterpart to The King and Queen, designed by John Denman, architect of the former Brighton and Hove Herald offices (fig 129); it featured that essential roadhouse requirement - a dance hall, and for more elite clientele, chauffeurs'

<sup>577</sup> Woodham p162-3

<sup>578</sup> BHH 7.7.1934 p12 supplement advert



accommodation and motor garages. There were also heraldic beasts, diamond pane windows and patterned brick, harking back to an Elizabethan 'golden age'.<sup>579</sup> It was this curious mix of imperial past splendour with the technological world of the interwar period that became a feature of much of suburbia and the tensions that this imposed is noted by some observers to be the underlying leit-motif of suburban Britain.

**ATTRACTIVE BUNGALOWS**  
UNSURPASSED IN VALUE AND CONSTRUCTION



**ALL FREEHOLD  
NO LEGAL  
OR SURVEY  
CHARGES  
CONCRETE  
ROADS**

**RATES.** Approximate assessment:  
Gross value £22  
Rateable value £13  
Weekly rates are therefore approximately 3/3d.

**Sitting Room.** 11 ft. 6 ins. x 10 ft. A particularly bright and pleasant room.

**Kitchen Breakfast Room.** Wonderfully equipped, deep sink, spacious larder, and many cupboards and shelves. Labour-saving in EVERY DETAIL.

**Large Hall.** Extremely artistic.

**Bedroom 1.** 11 ft. x 10 ft.

**Bedroom 2.** 9 ft. x 7 ft.

**Bathroom.** Porcelain enamelled bath, china wash basin and all CHROMIUM FITTINGS. W.C.

**LARGE GARDEN CHOICE OF DECORATIONS**

**Several different types to choose from - Prices £399 to £675**

**Price £399**  
**Total Deposit £39**

**Weekly Repayments 9/9**

**HASLER ESTATES Brighton Road LANCING**  
Telephone: LANCING 2283.

Fig 131  
Hasler Estates, Lancing, West Sussex  
Source: Alan Deakin collection

By 1938 development on the South Downs slowed, due to tighter local authority control of sites and increased public awareness of conservation issues. Less favourable locations came within the developers gaze. Hasler was developed on a salt marsh, 6ft above sea level, behind a muddy coastal lagoon.

Examples studied from suburbia, not just in Patcham but in the more rural locations of Lancing, Ferring and Hassocks - all West Sussex, point to these features. The Seaside Estate, Lancing along the Brighton Road adjoining Shoreham Airport, was developed by Hasler Estates; the estate brochure is undated but reference to documents relating to 12 Prince

<sup>579</sup> BHBC 8552/1

Avenue on the Hasler Estate show it was first sold in October 1939. The brochure displays a design reminiscent of those used on contemporary car design, with 'H.E.' in an entwined monogram, as on a car radiator grille. This car-induced design redolent of the industrial progress of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is complicated by the lettering being in a Gothic script, as is the title to the first page of information and the first letter of the accompanying text, which paradoxically outlines the modernity of -

'...having its own modern high class shopping centres, hotels, cinemas, etc. a new town is being erected on the South Coast...frequent comfortable electric trains run from Shoreham Airport Station which adjoins the estate.'<sup>580</sup>

Houses were marketed at £535 with - 'Crittall's guaranteed steel storm proof windows'<sup>581</sup> an essential fixture on this windswept coastal location, with bungalows at £499 -

'...completely and tastefully decorated throughout and all fittings are of the latest and most labour-saving description.'<sup>582</sup>

The bungalow in Prince Avenue actually sold at £399.<sup>583</sup> Hasler Estates were developing a small estate at the lower end of the private housing market, by the side of a tidal creek and saltmarsh, yet its tone of conjoining the historic script with the text of modern housing equipment was typical of its time of locations in far more salubrious surrounds. On the shoreline of the rich coastal plain west of Worthing, an area of rapid suburban growth, a development of 130 sites at Ferring-by-Sea, similarly exhibited the rural-nostalgic vision interwoven with modernity -

'This old-world Sussex village with its tiny beach...electric light and gas...country club with tennis and dancing.'

One aspect of the modern world was definitely not welcome at Ferring, as the same advertisement contained the following -

'The roads are private, charabancs are not allowed, and the tripper element is entirely eliminated.'<sup>584</sup>

In the mass housing market that was coming to dominate the private building programme of the 1930s, the marketing publicity was in a similar mode; the Ladies Mile Estate, Patcham, built in two stages from 1931-36, was portrayed in at least four illustrated brochures, all undated, but capable of being chronologically ordered, to show the succession of styles and

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<sup>580</sup> *Seaside estate brochure* p1

<sup>581</sup> *Seaside estate brochure* p13

<sup>582</sup> *Seaside estate brochure* p14

<sup>583</sup> A.Deakin pers.comm 20.5.2008

<sup>584</sup> *The Times* 12.2.1929



estate features. An early edition illustration shows a house-sized advertisement board extolling the virtues of - 'All electric lighting, heating, cooking.' However the first line of text is at odds with the later historicism - 'The old-world village of Patcham nestles in the South Downs...' <sup>585</sup> The subsequent edition starts with two contrasting images, the first is of a ribbon of new and identical semi-detached houses, this is followed by views of the old sunken Drove Road and the ivy clad church. <sup>586</sup> By the third edition the theme is continued; the description of Sussex as a county of picturesque villages, ancient buildings and stately homes precedes a statement on -

'...the amenities of modern life...shopping and entertainment facilities are thoroughly up-to-date...electricity, gas, water and main drainage.' <sup>587</sup>

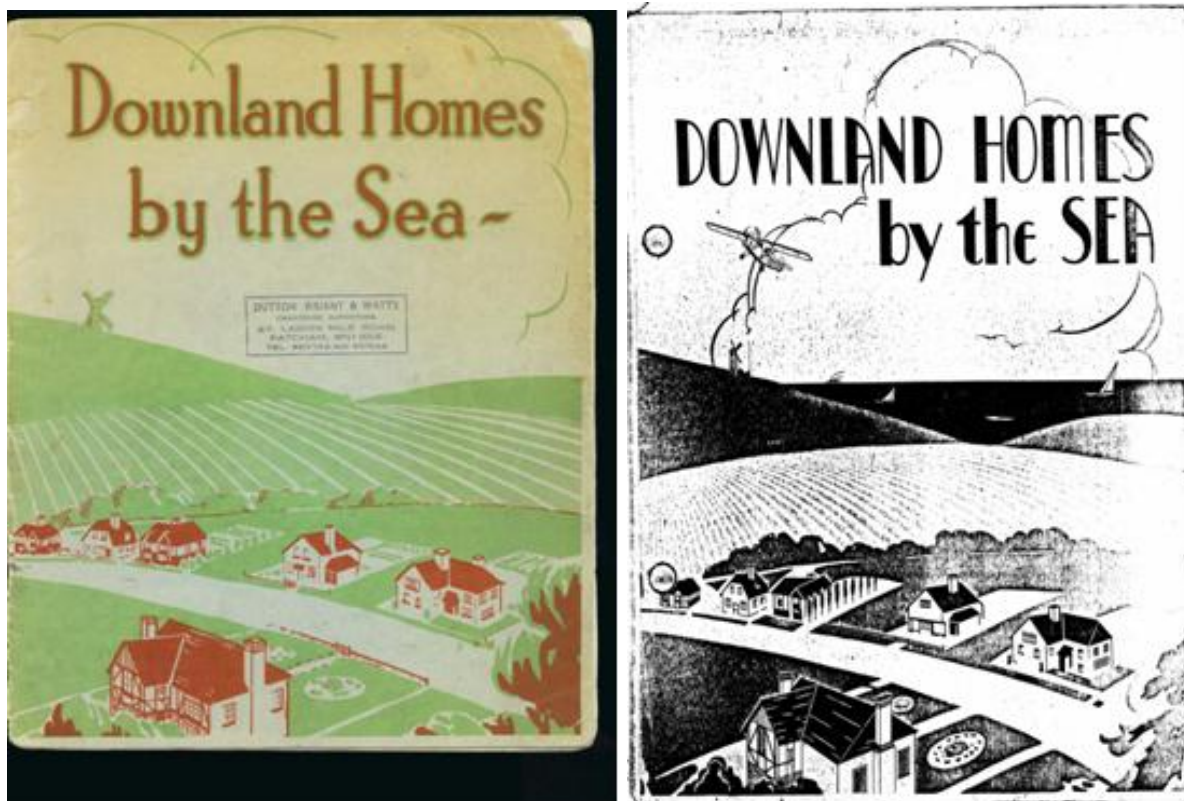


Fig 132  
'Downland Homes by the Sea'. c1934 & c1936  
Source: Brian Tulley collection

A dramatic and very Modernist change occurred in the appearance of the final brochure, while the base design of detached villas set amongst ploughland and rolling hills, topped by a windmill all remain in the final design, the whole landscape has been turned 180 degrees to

<sup>585</sup> *LME brochure* (nd 1932?) p6

<sup>586</sup> *LME brochure* (nd 1933?) p5-6

<sup>587</sup> *Downland Homes by the Sea* (c1934?) p2

show not only the English Channel, geographically not feasible in Patcham, but those symbols of Thirties modernism, an ocean liner, a speedboat and racing yachts. Above all swoops that most potent of modernist symbols - an aeroplane (fig132).

It is in this final brochure, undated, but probably 1936, that the modern world makes its presence even more fully felt. This copy alludes barely at all to the nostalgic but fully expounds the 'All Electric Service' -

'In this modern high class residential scheme provision is made for the full use of Electrical Services...it is fairly safe to say that in a few years ahead not many houses will be without electrical facilities.'<sup>588</sup>

Ferguson was always at pains to publicise the modernity of his schemes, however this brochure succeeded by many years in establishing Ladies Mile as the cutting edge of 1930s technology. His advertisement for the electrical facilities noted that -

'At Ladies Mile this house of the future is actually yours...electric wall plugs in every room to permit the free use of such labour saving appliances as electric cleaner, iron, kettle, toaster, hair dryer, wireless, television etc.'<sup>589</sup>

This latter item was prescient, as although television was available in London in 1936 to a very limited number of households from the transmitter at Alexandra Palace, it would not be readily available to see in Brighton until the Coronation in 1953; however a local newspaper of 1934 carried a report from the Brighton branch of the Wireless Dealers Association -

'...on the latest methods of transmitting and receiving pictures by television. This is the first television lecture ever given in Brighton...it is essential that all dealers should be brought up to date in this very latest branch of radio.'<sup>590</sup>

Smaller housing schemes in Patcham exhibited the similar dichotomy between tradition and modernity; one such example is the Braybon development on the site of the Withean Nursery<sup>591</sup>. Referred to as the Curwen Estate on Brighton Council archival records in March 1934, named from the previous wealthy landowners, it has had a change of name to Old Mill Estate by the time advertisements are placed in the local press in September 1934.<sup>592</sup> The duality of nostalgia and modernity is apparent in Braybon's advertising; while the illustrations are of detached, pitched-roof dwellings and the new estate name harks back to Ballards windmill adjacent to the estate but removed earlier in the century, the text of the

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<sup>588</sup> *Downland Homes by the Sea* (c1936?) p20

<sup>589</sup> *Downland Homes by the Sea* (c1936?) p 20

<sup>590</sup> *BHH* 16.6.1934 p19


<sup>591</sup> *BHH* 1.9.1934 p13

<sup>592</sup> BHBC NB 9665

press advertising espouses the modern world -

‘... sets a new standard in modern homes...central vacuum cleaning, Electrolux refrigerators...a house that almost cleans and heats itself...a Town House that is also a Downs House.’<sup>593</sup>

As with many such exclusive developments it has fewer social facilities than the smaller more lower middle-class properties, being devoid of shops or entertainment, sports facilities, church, school or public transport links.



**A TOWN HOUSE**  
that is also  
a "Downs House"

**OLD MILL ESTATE**  
**WITHDEAN**  
A BRAYBONS ESTATE

If you take a No. 5 or 5b bus to Withdean and alight at Old Mill Estate you will find, in the midst of well-wooded country, some of the most modern and tastefully designed houses in Brighton. The prices are moderate and range from £945 to £1,495. Particulars may be obtained on the estate, which lies between Carden Avenue and the London Road, or from Braybonds Ltd., 32, New Rd., Brighton.

**FROM £945 FREEHOLD**  
**£75 DOWN 26/2 WEEKLY**  
Clarion Advertising (Brighton) Ltd.

Fig 133

“...modern and tastefully designed...”

Old Mill Estate advertisement 1934<sup>594</sup>

Source: Brighton and Hove Herald

The ‘grand architect’ designs of Webb, Voysey, Lutyens et al have spawned a wealth of large detached properties that can be espied in the wealthier suburban areas of all British cities, usually set well back from the highway, secured from much public gaze by high hedges,

<sup>593</sup> BHH 1.9.1934 p10; BHH 27.10.1934 p1; BHH 24.11.1934 p12

<sup>594</sup> BHH 27.10.1934 p13

walls and stout fencing, accessed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by ‘Entry-phone’ systems, CCTV and electric gates. Jackson noted of the interwar developments around Greater London -

‘Only in the very highest price ranges of the speculative market, at or above £1,750, was it possible to find well-designed detached houses pleasingly set in their own plots.’<sup>595</sup>

The Patcham core area has few buildings - and none in the period under study - that constitute ‘higher-end’ housing, but the eastern Brighton suburb of Roedean has them in abundance. Adjacent to the dwelling in fig 134 are the properties named *Four Winds*, *Cobwebs*, *Georgian House*, *Sun Hollow*, *Thatched House*, *Towers*, *Sea Whispers*; house naming that evokes the sound of the suburbs, a topic covered in an unpublished paper by Lewis.<sup>596</sup> More prosaically, but apt considering Roedean’s location above a high, windswept, chalk sea cliff, is the lone dissenter from the idyll of suburbia; number 23 Roedean Crescent, in December 1934 building permission was granted under the house name of ‘*Bleeque*’...



Fig 134  
15 Roedean Crescent, Brighton.  
Building permission granted 16 June 1936.<sup>597</sup>  
Source: author’s own image 30.1.2009

*‘A number of houses built as a speculation on the many estates now being laid out in the south of England, generally variations on a few types designed by architects...’*<sup>598</sup>

<sup>595</sup> Jackson p100

<sup>596</sup> Lewis unpub ms

<sup>597</sup> BHBC file cards

<sup>598</sup> Carter p15

Grand designs in the Modern Movement style by Continental architects had a similar fate to the more traditional vernacular-inspired creations and their denouement came with the adoption from the mid-Thirties, of the Moderne. The war in 1939 effectively stopped all suburban developments and how the 'Moderne' would have developed without that hiatus is open to conjecture. Certainly an evolution could be anticipated as in earlier periods of suburban growth, but the later pre-war constructions remain as a truncated stage in a continuum of architectural change. After 1945 building was in the austerity mode and it was only in the early 1950s that house building commenced with a continuum from earlier styles.

George Ferguson, whose Ladies Mile Estate at Patcham was completed by 1936, moved on to develop the Hassocks Garden Village, north of Brighton in the Sussex Greensand country. The company address is given as Scotland House [Hassocks]<sup>599</sup>, so presumably Ferguson was still applying his practice of taking his Dumfriesshire roots to South East England. The suburban tension of combining nostalgia with modernity is seen in the first page of text -

'Modern homes in Saxon meadows...perfectly combining the charms of Nature with the comforts of Science.'<sup>600</sup>

Successive pages evoke the historicism beloved of the interwar period, a process best seen in the succession of historic pageants that were a feature of urban and rural communities alike, which were noted earlier in respect to Brighton at that time. 'The venerable Saxon hamlet of Keymer' precedes mention of the battle of Lewes; the traditional Sussex activities of orchard keepers, millers and blacksmiths are included as foils to descriptions of the gentry homes of Danny House and Newtimber Place.<sup>601</sup> The estate brochure shows sophisticated styles of 'Sun-trap' design, white rendered walls and Crittall's wrap-round windows. A local newspaper advertisement for the project noted it as 'Brighton's latest addition'<sup>602</sup> showing that not only was architectural style being watered down and homogenised at this period, but also the perception of municipal borders. Brighton had extended its borough area fivefold in 1928 and it might have been seen by some developers as due for another 'land grab' as joint town planning schemes were proposed for this area in the interwar period, although Hassocks lay outside the boundary of the 1928 scheme. Ferguson's brochure prose is a good exemplar both of the styles of architecture and the ethos of the wider suburban world of the mid-1930s. The colourful contents page (fig 13)] with its 'Gill-Sans' lettering and the artistic

<sup>599</sup> *Hassocks Homes Estates[HHE]* brochure p3; *HHE* brochure p2

<sup>600</sup> *HHE* brochure p3

<sup>601</sup> *HHE* brochure p8-9

<sup>602</sup> *BHH* 13.6.1936



representation of an estate bungalow is not in fact what the prospective purchaser would first see, as the cover of the brochure is a soft leather sleeve which serves to give the somewhat prosaic sales brochure an air of, if not real antiquity, certainly a semblance of it. Modernity peeps out of the lower corner, as if in hiding behind the traditional skirts of the brochure cover. The leather cover comes embossed with a crest-like device of the Ferguson company; this displays six builders trowels bordering a shield of a large tree and windmill separated by a builders ladder, the whole topped off, not by the more usual plumed helm, but by a Mock Tudor detached suburban house backed by a grove of trees; the indistinct embossed cover is repeated within the text, the composition completed by the Latin tag -

‘Nihil laborantibus difficile’ [‘nothing is denied to well-directed effort’].<sup>603</sup>

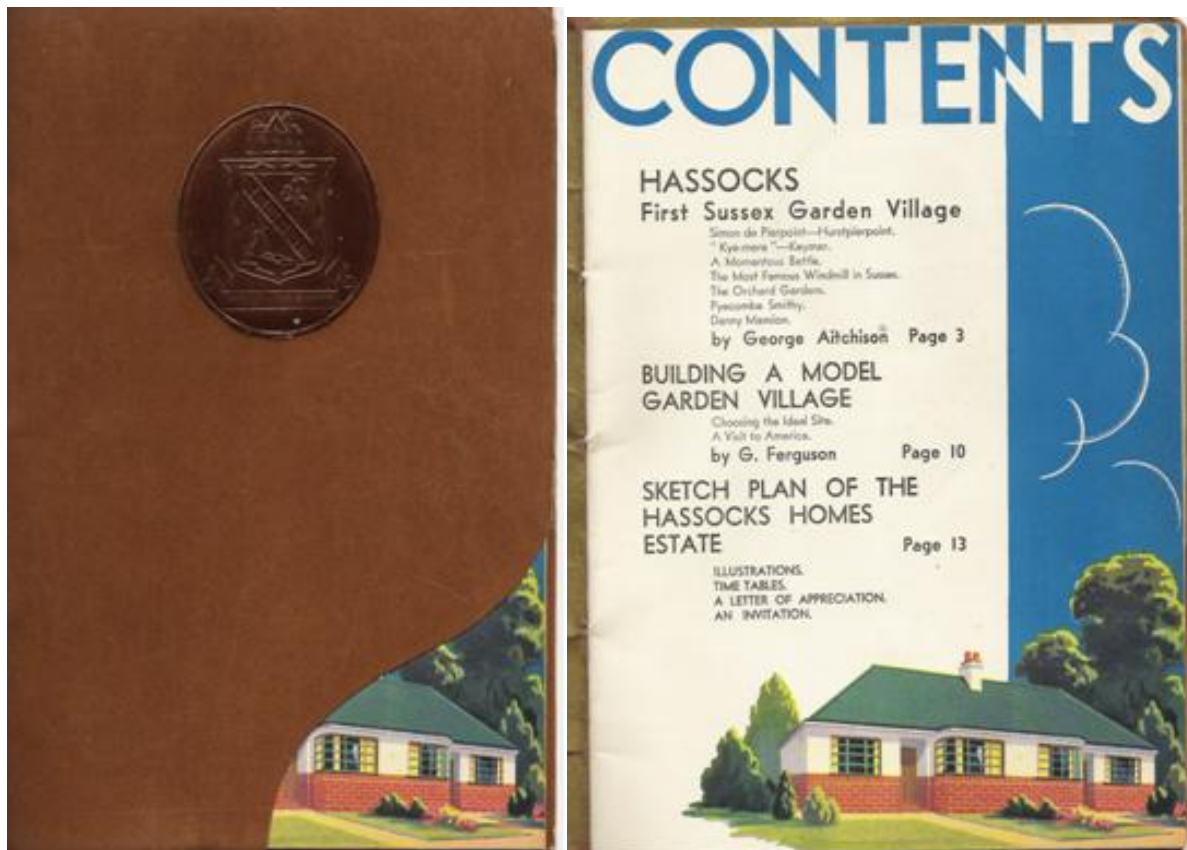


Fig 135  
Hassocks Homes Estate brochure 1936  
Source: John Hammond collection

<sup>603</sup> HHE brochure p13

In the interwar period the influence of the United States was undisputed in the promulgation of modernity, whether through films, music, writing, fashion or design of trains, planes or automobiles.<sup>604</sup> It is thus then surprising to find that the developers of Hassocks Garden Village, a modest housing scheme in rural Mid-Sussex, had been requested by the US Committee of Economic Recovery to visit New York and Washington and to submit plans of their 'Town-planned Estates' to President Roosevelt.<sup>605</sup> Hassocks Garden Village was a development benefiting from the experience of building in Patcham as the brochure noted -

'We adopted in principle the plans of the houses and bungalows which had proved so wonderfully popular on the Ladies Mile Estate...the same charm and variety of design and the same comprehensive modern equipment... electric points supplied throughout...scientifically-designed fireplaces...'<sup>606</sup>

It was of this new modernising suburban world that Mandler observed -

'It is in this interwar period that the 'Englishness' literature claims, the rural-nostalgic vision accumulating in elite culture was successfully diffused to a wider mainly suburban audience.'<sup>607</sup>

The dichotomy of suburban living, the British nostalgic love of 'tradition' linked to a yearning for a comfortable 'modern' lifestyle is fully exploited here. Ferguson was a highly successful and astute estate developer and knew the market intimately; the imagery of the estate sketch plan (fig 136) shows the electric train at Hassocks station where it collects briefcase-wielding commuters and deposits hikers clad in tweed plus-fours. Tennis courts nestle against a nursery garden with its gaitered labourer, a grand building - Wentworth House in its park - looks out to 'Hollywood Moderne' bungalows; a pail-carrying milkmaid works adjacent to yet more tennis courts, mixed suburban housing sits in a planned road layout bordered by Ockley Manor and Oldlands Mill; a be-smocked artist redolent of neighbouring Ditchling and Eric Gill, captures the new suburban scene on a canvas. Hassocks Garden Village, although physically removed from Patcham by 4 miles of Sussex downland can be seen as its 'social' extension.

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<sup>604</sup>Benton C, Benton T and Wood G (eds) (2003) *Art Deco 1910-1939* p334

<sup>605</sup>*HHE* brochure p11

<sup>606</sup>*HHE* brochure p11

<sup>607</sup>Mandler p170

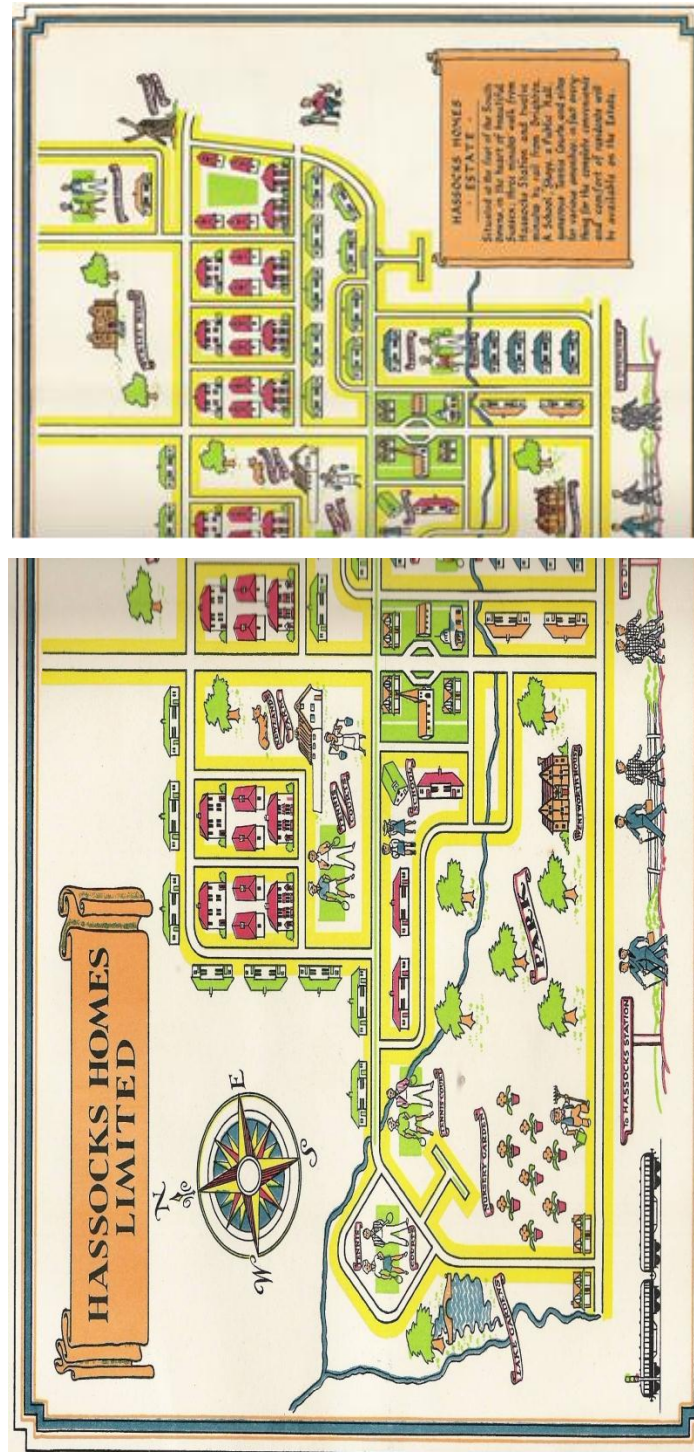


Fig 136  
Hassocks Garden Suburb sketch plan 1936<sup>608</sup>  
Source: John Hammond collection

The use by Brighton of interwar planning regulations, had limited housing developments to locations below the 300 ft. contour, a selling point in the Ladies Mile literature -

‘Notice the South Downs...Brighton Corporation have protected this under

<sup>608</sup> HHE brochure endpaper

Downland Preservation, and no further building will be allowed.’<sup>609</sup>

With this limit to northern growth there was no logical area of expansion within the Patcham area for a further Ferguson scheme, undeveloped land within Patcham lay on the hills to the west and east of the study area but both these areas, respectively Withdean and Hollingbury were part of a rival developers empire that of TJ Braybon, and by the mid-Thirties building had commenced at those locations, developments cut short by the coming war. Ferguson, ever mindful of looking to the future saw possibilities of utilising the rurality of the Greensand ridge north of the Downs as a counter to Brighton’s urbanity, a suburb beyond a suburb; more particularly the railway station at Hassocks allowed for commuting to Brighton or London, all selling points in publicity. This 1936 project was a precursor of the post war expansion of small country towns either as New Towns or in the later counter-urbanisation.

There was a strong tendency to adopt the design principles of the dwelling’s exterior to that of the interior, and the nostalgia-modernist dichotomy seen as so prevalent in the suburb was all apparent, as a review of design magazines and journals of the period confirms. Anthony Bertram summed this up in *Design* 1938 -

‘The average bungalow today wavers in appearance between the ‘bijou-baronial’ and the ‘Tudoristic’... [but]...the owner is neither a knight or nor a villein but Mr Smith of ‘Osocosity’.’<sup>610</sup>

The key themes that underlie this research appear in this chapter in a different form from the earlier chronological chapters; the continuity is evident in the adaption of Tudor rural architectural styles, through 19<sup>th</sup> century capitalists’ country houses, to the avenues and closes of suburban Brighton. The change is that these ‘bijou-baronial’ dwellings are illuminated, heated and serviced through the provision of electricity. The diffusion of styles down the architectural hierarchy from stockbroker mansion to laundryman’s bungalow ensured a diversity of design, further diffused with the introduction of Modernist features. The design of much suburbia gave scope for occupants to put their own stamp on the property by the adaption of the original designs to their particular desires; the design books and brochures of the developers being the initial base from which occupants mould their own dwellings, such that over time the cycle of development dilutes the overall ethos or corporate appearance to one of individuality. The passage of time gives perspective to the seemingly anodyne appearance of much suburbia; observation of detail reveals the richness of suburbia.

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<sup>609</sup> *Downland Homes by the Sea* brochure (c1936?)p5

<sup>610</sup> Bertram A(1938) *Design* p 16

A stroll through any suburban estate will reveal the veracity of this. Each dwelling showing the diversity, often subtle, from one property to its neighbours; the standard design of the architect and developer, the ground-plan and interior shaping that typifies suburban housing, is all too apparent on the blueprint plans deposited as part of the interwar planning process. What is not evident is the personalisation of the standard pattern by the developer keen to avoid the negative comment aimed at much suburban housing; this allowed cement pointing to be in a variety of shades, with plainly coursed brick or elaborately patterned, allowed wall coverings to be cement render, roughcast or pebbledash, could incorporate local flints or imitation stone; endless variation within a standard built form creating the diversity emphasised in this thesis. This variety of design detail is a factor of suburban housing that is lost in the wider narrative of urban growth and seldom encountered in the literature, although any suburb when viewed from the pavement level reveals the diversity.

The term 'suburbia' can conjure up an image to many of similarity, especially when the prefix 'interwar' is added; yet even that is a term that does not stand up to close inspection. The 'Tudorbethan' image beloved of the casual commentary, and typified by fig 134, must yield to the image of the 'Moderne' fig 121. The 'suburbia' of the critic is in fact composed of a number of estates, themselves composed of buildings of a range of dates, which in the interwar building boom could change dramatically yearly. These estates have separate roads, themselves having individual structures of detached and semi-detached dwellings; these in turn have details that delineate them from their immediate neighbours.

The final word must go to the Punch cartoonist 'Pont' whose observations on interwar social niceties neatly sum up the interwar interior design continuum between 'a weakness for oak beams' and 'The Architect' (figs 137-138). The following chapter takes the scene from the exterior of suburbia 'through the front door' to note the internal geography and styles, and 'through the back door' to the suburban gardens.



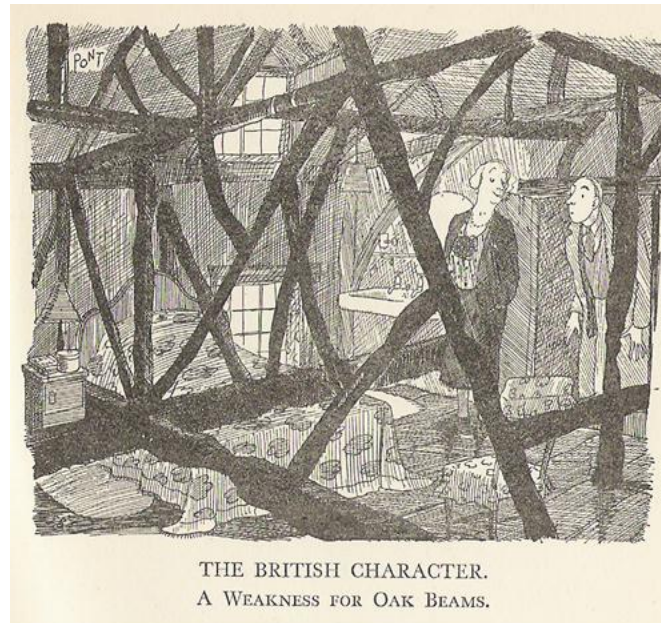


Fig 137

The British character: a weakness for oak beams <sup>611</sup>

Source: 'Pont' (Graham Laidlaw) 1938

The interwar British design dilemma; nostalgia.

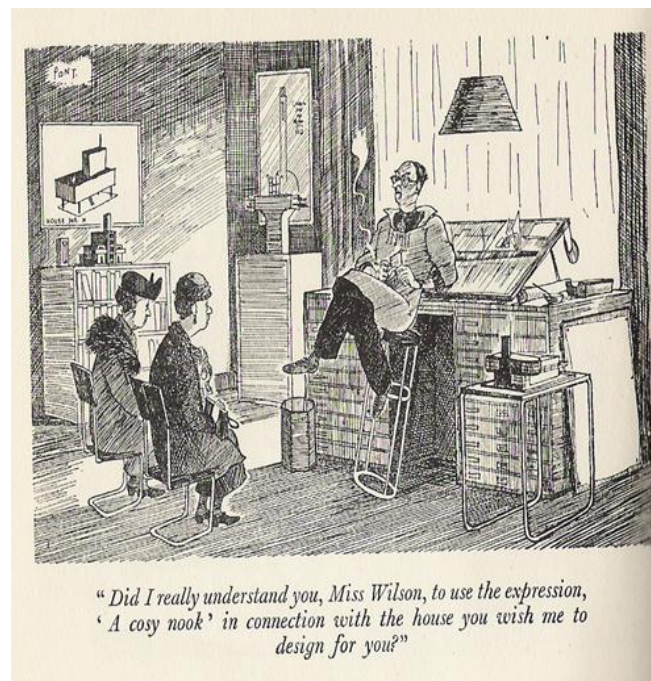


Fig 138

*'The British at home'*

Source: 'Pont' (Graham Laidlaw) 1939 <sup>612</sup>

The interwar British design dilemma; modernism

<sup>611</sup>'Pont'(1938) *The British character* p91

<sup>612</sup>'Pont'(1939) *The British at home* p62

## Chapter 8

Inside the front door - aspects of suburban interiors... and a garden foray.



Fig 139

Inside the front door -143 Mackie Avenue, Patcham.

Source: author's own image 12.4.2004

Architects plans drawn 13 November 1934.

Building permission granted 16 July 1935.<sup>613</sup>

*'Most houses...had a painted front door, the top third of which was invariably glazed....small panes arranged in a rectangular or oval pattern.'*<sup>614</sup>

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<sup>613</sup> BHBC NBX35

<sup>614</sup> Barrett and Phillips p128

The changing external appearance of housing during the interwar was mirrored in the changing styles and designs of the interior, and as the individualism of the plotlands gave way to the corporate modernity of the large later interwar estates so did the layouts, artefacts and materials. A wealth of publications exist which show the designs and artefacts, categorised by period or location within the house. What is more difficult to put together is a picture of the reality of suburban living as opposed to the perceived view through the lens - or illustrator's drawing - as depicted in the pages of *Ideal Home* magazine or popular publications such as the Daily Express *Home of Today*.



Fig 140  
Modernism-v-Modern Tudor  
Source: The Ideal Home Magazine 1938<sup>615</sup>

The tone for the later interwar interior is set within the mixed messages of the first two pages of a copy of *Ideal Home* Magazine of 1938, to the left is a modernist structure and a 'middle-class' couple, to the right an advert for 'Tudor' oak furniture; similarly the 'Daily Express Housewives Book of 1937' is a compendium of useful information with the latest advances and innovations in cleaners, fridges, cookers and fires portrayed in what were very traditional suburban households with the occasional foray into a modernist interior.<sup>616</sup>

<sup>615</sup> *The Ideal Home magazine* vol 38 n1 July 1938 inside cover, pi

<sup>616</sup> Anon (1937) *Daily Express Housewives Book* passim

While there is much published material on ‘standard suburbia’ there is little published documentary evidence for the other end of the housing spectrum, for instance the interiors of the army huts that sprung up in the years following the First World War. The main published sources for most of the plotlands are the work of Hardy and Ward and Anthony King; as we have seen the former write extensively on the legislative processes and social background that led to the formation of the scattered colonies of makeshift dwellings, and while the external appearance is well documented, there is barely a mention of the interiors. King contains in *The Bungalow*, a page reproduced from *The Woodworker* 1925 which illustrates - ‘A railway carriage bungalow, suggesting how a disused corridor coach may be adapted.’ In five line drawings an ‘ideal’ interior view is depicted with the final view of the exterior showing a decidedly superior dwelling. (fig141)<sup>617</sup> Although this is a railway carriage, a form of dwelling rare in Patcham, it is the only depiction, other than a plan drawing of a plotland interior in Allen 1919 (fig142) yet unearthed. This illustration seems a far cry from the descriptions of reality recorded in the Essex plotland of Langdon Hills, Basildon, which contains a number of observations which could not have been too much at variance with life in Patcham -

‘Mum used to organise ‘water patrols’. She had a vast collection of water containers of every shape and size...a big blue wooden home-made wheelbarrow that we used to fill with big water bottles and push round to the tap...the rainwater butt...around the back of the chalet.’<sup>618</sup>

‘At Barville we had to use an outside loo, which was a loo seat on a large drum inside a spider-infested shed under the trees.’<sup>619</sup>

For the ‘shack and track’ settlements on the fringe of Brighton the accounts of Holland and Davis, relating to Woodingdean and Sweet Hill respectively, point to a rudimentary existence; Douglas Holland recalled life in the lyrically named Channel View Road -

‘Our means of lighting was by paraffin oil lamps and we cooked with Valour perfection stoves ...we also had a coal range...we had an oil lamp with a mirror in the shape of a car headlight reflectors which also magnified the light. Our toilet amenities consisted of a shed at the bottom of the garden with a toilet seat and a bucket...in the main the dwellings were shacks...my dwelling consisted of two bedrooms, a kitchen, living room and scullery...a tin shed with an earth floor.’<sup>620</sup>

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<sup>617</sup> King AD (1984) *The Bungalow* p176

<sup>618</sup> Walker D p36

<sup>619</sup> Walker D p37

<sup>620</sup> Mercer and Holland p140-141



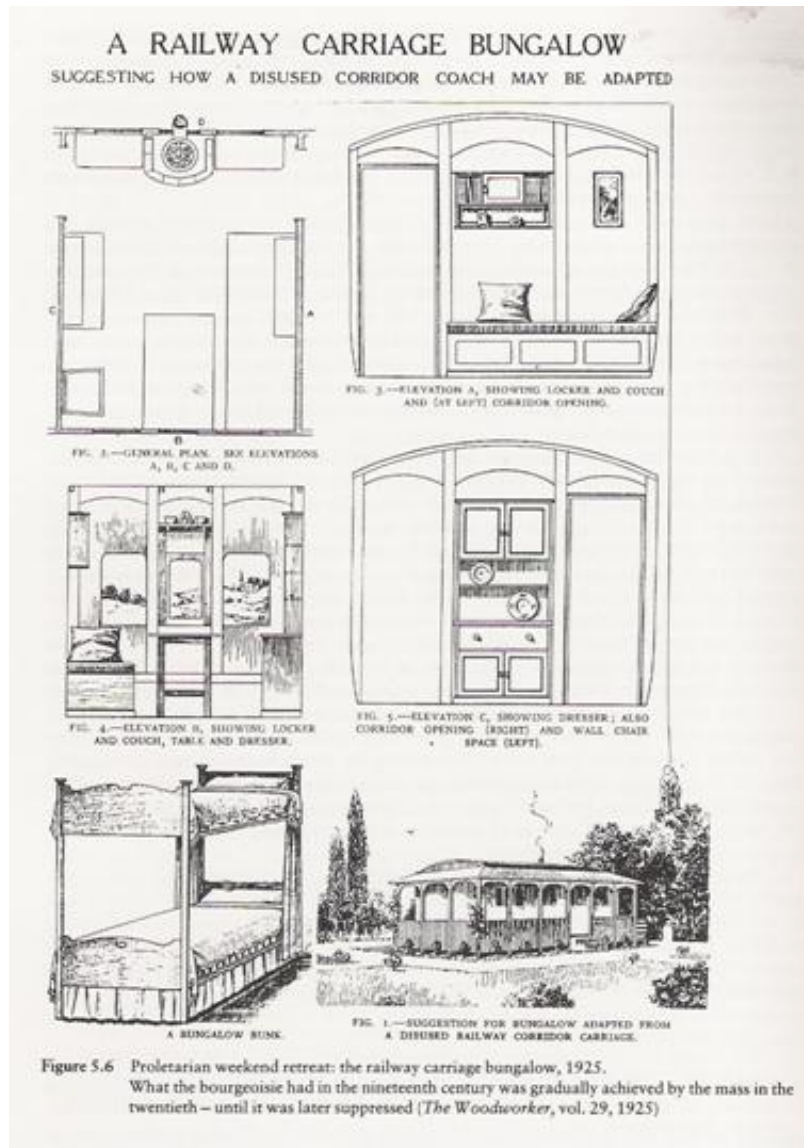


Fig 141  
Railway carriage interior 1925 <sup>621</sup>  
Source: The Bungalow

If life on the windswept downland east of the resort was akin to colonial settler life, it was no less austere in the army huts on the high chalk slopes of Sweet Hill, Patcham; HD Davis recalls -

‘A large room at the northern end provided a kitchen and living room and contained a kitchen range on a hearth for warmth and cooking. A bench was used for food preparation. No sink or running water. All our fresh water was collected in a deep tank from rainwater collected from the corrugated iron roof. There were

<sup>621</sup> King p176



perhaps eight rooms leading off the central corridor...there was no bathroom or laundry...personal matters were provided for in a small hut a few paces from the door.’<sup>622</sup>

Out on the heavy London Clays of Essex, similar interiors were recalled -

‘...we...put milk in a bucket of cold water in the shade. Our other food would be kept in a safe or wooden framed wire larder. ..we only had simple ways to cook it-like a primus stove...it was a bit of a nuisance to have to fetch water from the tap (up the lane) or collect rainwater for washing.’<sup>623</sup>

Cooking for a family was not an easy task, on another pre-Basildon plotland at Dunton Hall, one early resident recalled -

‘...mother used to cook on paraffin on a biggish stove. They had this big bottle on the side. You filled that up and turned it over and it would automatically feed the two wicks. It had an oven on top of it that she used to do roasting...’<sup>624</sup>

Lit by oil lamps and heated by paraffin stoves, a dangerous combination in a tarred wooden hut with boisterous children on the loose, life in the plotlands could be precarious. Comments by the members of the legal teams involved in the Brighton Water Bill of 1924 points to a primitive existence on the South Downs -

‘I will call them bungalows but they are much more in the nature of temporary habitations. How long some of them will last we do not know...you are liable to get pigstyes, cowsheds, fowl huts and things of that sort.’<sup>625</sup>

Exacerbated by the remote locations, the delivery of building materials and interior fittings was difficult and costly. Once delivered to site there was always the possibility of the ‘disappearance’ of materials, as noted by HD Davis -

‘Frequently building materials were delivered to a plot belonging to a plot-owner who was not living there but would pay a visit at the weekend, thieves had ample opportunity, even in broad daylight to spirit away any item that took their fancy...some of the stolen materials could be seen incorporated in a building structure in progress on another plot’<sup>626</sup>

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<sup>622</sup> Davis p2

<sup>623</sup> Walker p38

<sup>624</sup> McKay K (2000) *Plotland memories* p20

<sup>625</sup> ESRO DB/B1/15 p8-9

<sup>626</sup> Davis p3

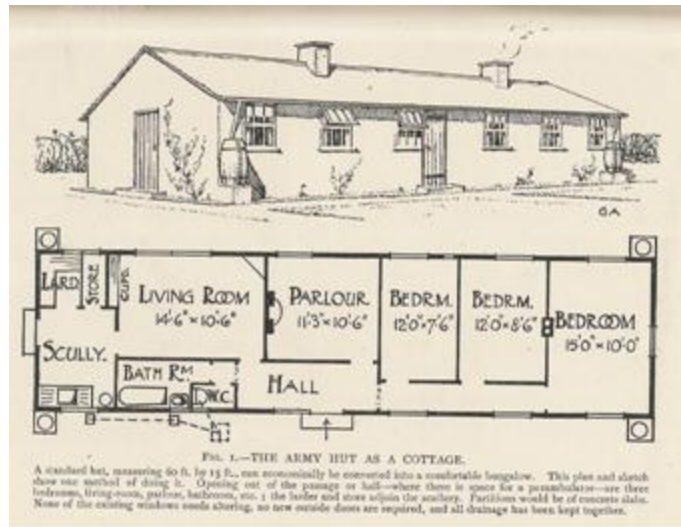


Fig 142  
The army hut as cottage 1919  
Source: G. Allen

The interior of later constructions is better documented and illustrations for the later estates are a feature of the lavish brochures produced by the developers. Similarly the architectural journals and illustrated volumes of the period are very much aimed at the higher echelons; publications with such suggestive titles as *'Houses for Moderate Means'* and *'Small houses £500-£2,500'*.<sup>627</sup> In the former the preface contains the statement -

'...the term 'moderate' is elastic; what would be considered 'moderate' by one person might seem affluence or penury to others.'<sup>628</sup>

The introduction to this publication was expounding the use of the new materials, and in discussing interiors goes on to state -

'For the interior lining of rooms, modern production has certainly given us good new materials in plywood and wallboard ...it opens up an entirely new field of interior decoration. Wallboard takes the place of plasterwork...the space between the boards is taken up with a wood strip... which produces the effect that has earned the name of 'tea-shop Tudor'.<sup>629</sup>

King records this style earlier than the period evoked by Randall-Philips; the *Daily Mail Bungalow Book 1922* included a host of advertisements for these new materials which cut down on labour-intensive skills - 'A dining room, furnished in 'Sundeala' wallboard with

<sup>627</sup> Randall-Philips R (1936) *Houses for moderate means*; Myles-Wright (1938) *Small houses £500-£2,500*

<sup>628</sup> Randall-Philips p6

<sup>629</sup> Randall-Philips p10

oak-stained wooden strips covering the joints.’<sup>630</sup> An advertising sample for Sundeala depicts this well, with the impression of an upper-class theme, open fire, a gun over the fireplace, beamed ceiling, all contrived within the modern wall-boarded enclosed space, aiming for the upwardly mobile element of the new property-owning class, albeit omitting the gentlemen’s evening clothes.

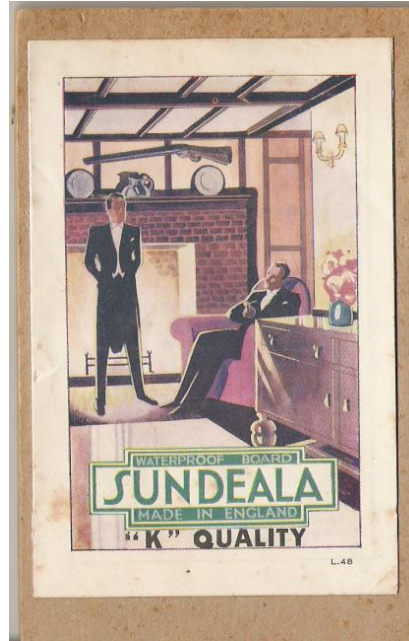


Fig 143

Sundeala sample board

Source: author’s collection

“The Patent Impermeable Millboard Co.Ltd.Sunbury Common, Middlesex”

The layout of the bedroom in *Houses for moderate means*, again suggests the design is aimed at the higher end of the middle class -

‘...built-in cupboards...commend themselves in bedrooms...with a staggered division wall, which is an American practice...’<sup>631</sup>

The kitchen meanwhile, was viewed in the light of the new smaller dwellings which were a feature of much interwar construction -

‘In the scheming of the kitchen - or rather, the kitchen scullery - the service hatch between dining-room and kitchen saves endless journeys.’<sup>632</sup>

<sup>630</sup> King p164

<sup>631</sup> Randall-Philips p10

<sup>632</sup> Randall-Philips p10-11



Fig 144  
 'Decorative schemes for 1939'  
 Suburban Hertfordshire lifestyle  
 Source; author's collection

What is missing from the published accounts are descriptions and images of the interiors of those 'middle-range' buildings that were being constructed in the period between the plotlands of the early to mid-1920s and the corporate estates of the next decade. Many of the published sources that deal with interior design or furniture styles are from the perspective of 'high' design, Art Deco or Moderne. Even publications that purported to deal with the 'lower' form of building were reticent to go into too much detail on either their external or internal appearance. Gunn's 1932 *Economy in house design* noted in its introduction -

'The cheapest building is probably a galvanised iron hut, but though it seems that the present-day trend is away from old-time standards of permanence...we have hardly reached the hut stage in this degradation of aim yet, and it is not the writer's intention to discuss structural methods which belong to the temporary or 'semi-permanent' class, though it may be admitted that in some fields, where needs are subject to rapid change or development, these have their uses.'<sup>633</sup>

<sup>633</sup> Gunn E (1932) *Economy in house design* p1

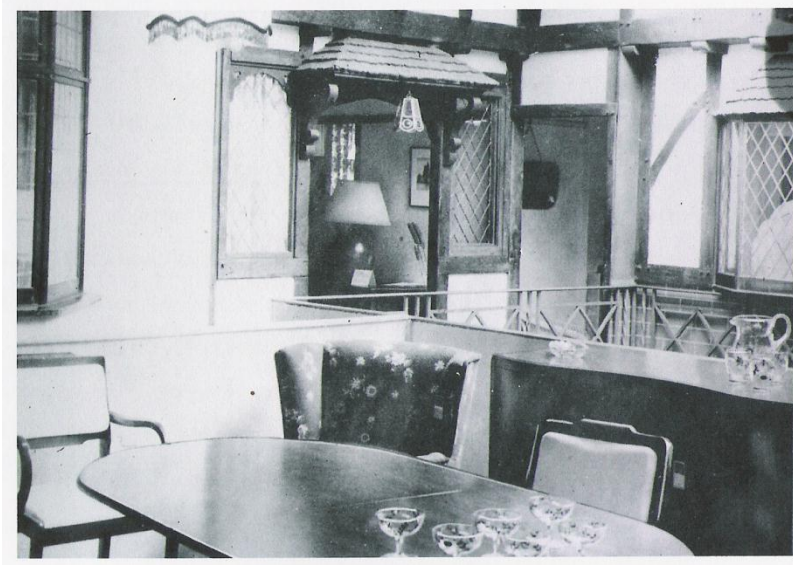


Fig 145

Model Tudor Cottage, Johnson's store, Western Rd Brighton<sup>634</sup>

Source: Bernard Johnson collection

Although the dining room appears to be in the front garden, this is in fact a result of the multiple displays within the store.

It is more difficult to reconstruct the interior of the new Patcham housing, properties whose new occupiers would be purchasing domestic goods far from the sale rooms of the West End or the designers of the Bauhaus. Potential owners or occupiers of the new suburb might aspire to the designs seen in fig 144 but the reality was often more mundane as in the display of fig 145. One source of information to fill in this gap is the advertising content of the local and national press. The range of household products and furnishings were as varied as the housing they would be going into; for those with ample incomes there were many outlets in Brighton that could supply these domestic goods; Maples - 'The largest furnishing house in the world' had a branch at 109 Kings Road on Brighton seafront, which was in the interwar period a prime retail area. Bedroom suites were on sale from £7.10s.0d, British Axminster carpets from £3.12s.0d.<sup>635</sup> Johnson Brothers in Western Rd - 'Complete home furnishers' - were advertising their wares in 'Tudor Cottage Model Rooms'.<sup>636</sup> Further down the social scale were the goods from the London

<sup>634</sup> Johnson B (c1980?) *The history of Johnson brothers* p18

<sup>635</sup> BHH 17.6.33 p4

<sup>636</sup> BHH 7.11.1931



and County Furnishing Co. on London Road Brighton, a locality ideally placed for the Patcham trade. Here, a '3 feet oak suite (cash or easy payments)' could be had for £6.10s.0d. The advert noted that the store was open until 9pm on Saturdays, an important consideration as in this period many people worked on Saturday morning and were paid their wages at midday, and shopkeepers were keen to divert this money at the earliest opportunity.<sup>637</sup> Buying new goods in a store was but one option, an alternative was to buy at auction and there were a number of auction houses that did a brisk trade in second-hand goods and were a means of acquiring good quality products at lower prices. Some firms such as my grandfather's business, Mead and Co. of Bond St. Brighton, only sold through their auction rooms and the sale lots would be from a variety of households, (fig 147) but other auctioneers such as Jenner and Dell would conduct sales at the vendors' premises. One such sale noted in 1934 was at a highly prestigious Brighton address, 37 Sussex Square, Kemp Town, the residence of the French consul.<sup>638</sup> Lower down the social order were the furniture and goods offered for sale in the small ads columns - 'Surplus furniture and bedding for sale - apply 170 Havelock Road Brighton.'<sup>639</sup>

Somewhere along the continuum from new to second hand were 'house-furnishers' who carried out part of their trade in new and part-used furniture, generally situated away from the mainstream retail areas in the poorer, older parts of the resort. Examples of these were Peters in the - then - industrial area of North Road, and Coopers in the - then - quaint and rundown 'Lanes' of the Old Town; both of these would have been familiar to the new suburban dwellers in Patcham. Evidence from archival and anecdotal sources suggest many of the new suburban dwellers were migrating from central Brighton, often from the working class and lower middle class districts along the central valley.<sup>640</sup> This feature was noted in an earlier chapter. Peters placed adverts in the publicity brochures of the Ladies Mile Estate, proclaiming - 'Modern furniture for modern homes... terms arranged if desired'; thus carefully omitting any reference to their second-hand stock.<sup>641</sup>

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<sup>637</sup> *BHH* 4.2.1933 p13; Basil Seal pers.comm (c1968?)

<sup>638</sup> *BHH* 9.6.1934 p2

<sup>639</sup> *BHH* 9.6.1934 p20

<sup>640</sup> *Pikes Directory* 1938 p1863; *BHH* 9.6.1934 p4

<sup>641</sup> *LME* (c1933?) p24



Fig 146  
Advertisement 1938  
Source: Pike's Directory<sup>642</sup>

During the interwar period there was a healthy trade to be made in this sale of second hand furniture, as although the major stores advertised extensively in the press and in magazines such as *Ideal Home*, and were a source of ideas for furnishing the new homes, the cost of house-purchase and associated moving costs meant many households had to bridge the money gap by buying at the second-hand stores and auction rooms. The growth in new housing, whether for purchase or rental, ensured there was a ready market for goods to fit out the new homes.

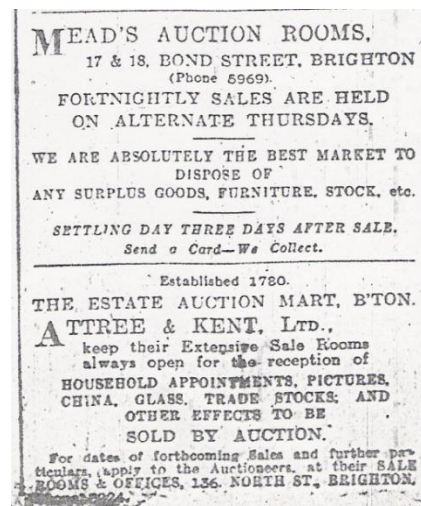


Fig 147  
Two central Brighton auction rooms, advertisement 1924<sup>643</sup>  
Source: Brighton & Hove Herald

<sup>642</sup> *Pikes Directory* 1938 p1863

<sup>643</sup> *BHH* 10.5.1924 p5

Everyday interiors have changed dramatically over the past 70 years and by the very nature of social change, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century there are few dwellings that retain much of their interwar interior. It was a chance encounter that directed research to Mrs Ethel Darling whose house at 143 Mackie Avenue, Ladies Mile Estate, Patcham had been her home since 'Just before Christmas 1946'. Mrs Darling allowed photography of her home which appeared to contain almost all of its original period detail. From comparison with the final 1936 LME brochure and the fact that 143 Mackie Avenue was granted building permission in July 1935 it is possible to establish that much of the interior of her home was indeed original.<sup>644</sup> The wood grained doors and chromed fittings in stepped zigurat Art Deco shapes, dark wood dado rails and high level bookshelf frieze are all as fitted in 1935 (fig 148). In the bathroom the black and white chequer work band of tile inserts at dado height, is exactly that described in design publications and more pertinently in the interwar Ladies Mile brochures; the kitchen still contains the white ceramic butler sink with a wooden drainer to one side (fig 149).<sup>645</sup>

The range of styles and prices to fit out the new housing that was available to the public covered a broad spectrum with some wide ranging disparity, something which permeated much new suburban life. An example of this is simply seen in the twin accounts of laundry arrangements in the domestic household as seen from the perspective of the 'shack and track' settlements and their stylistic opposites on the avenues of the Ladies Mile and Old Mill Estates. Mr Davis recalls washday on Sweet Hill as - '... a heavy chore involving the use of a boiler over a fire and hand scrubbing with a bar of soap'.<sup>646</sup> This was a common method even away from the plotlands and was listed in the Daily Express '*Home of Today*' volume -

'The built-in type of copper is usually heated by a mixture of coke and cinders, or wood as these fuels are cheaper than coal.'<sup>647</sup>

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<sup>644</sup> Mrs Darling pers.comm 18.7.2005; *Downland Homes by the Sea*; BHBC NB x235

<sup>645</sup> Yorke p105, p98

<sup>646</sup> Davis p4

<sup>647</sup> *The home of today* p107



Fig 148  
143 Mackie Avenue, interiors  
Source: author's own images 12.4.2004





Fig 149  
143 Mackie Avenue, bathroom & kitchen  
Source: author's own image 12.4.2004



Ten years on from the primitive conditions of the plotlands the occupants of the Ladies Mile Estate had the very latest in laundry technology - '...electric hot water, electric washing...regular features of the well-managed and up-to-date home.'<sup>648</sup> The 'Home of Today' noted how easy it was to access this new form of laundry work -

'Electrically-operated washing machines are now much reduced in price compared to what they were a few years ago. They may ...be bought on the hire-purchase system, which is...a boon to the housewife of small means.'<sup>649</sup>

Somewhere between these two extremes would lie the 'Butterfield's Dolly Tubs' shown in an *Ideal Home* 1936 advertisement '...with built-in rubbing board'<sup>650</sup> this was also described as 'a favourite device in rural districts or in houses not yet fitted with up-to-date improvements.'<sup>651</sup>

LABOUR-SAVING AND DOMESTIC APPLIANCES SECTION: DOLLY TUBS, ETC. 43



**SURE! We do better because we sell BUTTERFIELD'S DOLLY TUBS**

**"STRONGA" Dolly Tub**  
This Dolly is a tub with a built-in rubbing board. It is made of heavy iron and is guaranteed to last for years. Price 12/6.

**"STAR" Dolly Tub**  
This Dolly is a tub with a built-in rubbing board. It is made of heavy iron and is guaranteed to last for years. Price 12/6.

**RUB-A-TUB**  
This Dolly is a tub with a built-in rubbing board. It is made of heavy iron and is guaranteed to last for years. Price 12/6.

**"ANTI-SPLASH" Dolly Tub**  
This Dolly is a tub with a built-in rubbing board. It is made of heavy iron and is guaranteed to last for years. Price 12/6.

**No. 22 "STAR" Wringer Stand**  
This wringer stand is made of heavy iron and is guaranteed to last for years. Price 12/6.

**"SUPA" Dust Bin**  
This dust bin is made of heavy iron and is guaranteed to last for years. Price 12/6.

**DUST BINS**

**"CHALLANGA" Dust Bin**  
This dust bin is made of heavy iron and is guaranteed to last for years. Price 12/6.

**WRINGER STANDS**

**Butterfield's OF SHIPLEY**  
Builders of London for 50 Years

**LONDON OFFICE:**  
SAFFRY HOUSE, BAKER ST., N.W. 1.  
Phone: WATKIN 3939

An extract from the Ironmongers' Standard Catalogue, 1936-7, showing dolly tubs and a wringer stand.

This UNIVERSAL WASHER user writes:

**"It takes the hard work out of washing..."**

**Mrs. L. Charles, Barrow Street, St. Helens, continues in her letter:**

**"I have used one of your washers for over four years with every satisfaction. It has done a lot of work and has been a great boon because it takes the hard work out of washing. I strongly recommend it for getting rid of wasday drudgery."**

**UNIVERSAL PRAISE FROM HOUSEWIVES**

The UNIVERSAL Electric Washer makes light of the heaviest wash. In four minutes you can wash 20 items such as Nighties, Panties, Vests, Slips, etc. In six minutes you can wash and wring a full-size double blanket. A UNIVERSAL Electric Washer will be the most treasured of all your labour-saving devices. It saves money, time and physical strain. Prices from 19 gns. cash, or 3/- weekly. Literature on request.

**DEMONSTRATION GLADLY ARRANGED IN YOUR HOME WITHOUT OBLIGATION.**

**L. G. HAWKINS & CO., LTD., 30/35, Drury Lane, London, W.C.2.**

**AUTOMATIC, STREAMLINED, HEAT-CONTROLLED IRON.**

This beautifully designed "UNIVERSAL" iron has a pre-set switch to give just the right heat for different fabrics. Irons backwards and sideways as easily as forward. Air-cooled handle. Price 33/9.

Automatically controlled apparatus is a special feature of "Universal" products. Descriptive leaflet on request.

**UNIVERSAL**

**ELECTRIC APPLIANCES**

**BACKED BY OVER 90 YEARS' SOUND MANUFACTURING EXPERIENCE**

**Refrigerators**

**Vacuum Cleaners**

**Automatic Iron**

**Automatic Toaster**

Butterfield's Dolly Tubs 1936<sup>652</sup>

Universal washer 1938<sup>653</sup>

Fig 150

Domestic laundry

Source: Laundry Bygones & Ideal Homes

<sup>648</sup> Downland homes by the sea (c1936?) p20

<sup>649</sup> The home of today p111

<sup>650</sup> Sambrook P (1983) Laundry bygones p6

<sup>651</sup> The home of today p107

<sup>652</sup> Sambrook p6

<sup>653</sup> The Ideal Home (1938) v38 n1 p61

The rapid growth of housing both in numbers erected and in the area covered was a boon to the depressed postwar economy of the UK as each new dwelling needed fitting out with fixtures and fittings of even the most basic nature. It has been noted elsewhere in this work that this increased consumption of artefacts for the home gave a strong emphasis to UK manufacturers of domestic products, which benefited in particular the new light industries of the South East, and was responsible for the dramatic increase in the range of factories needed to provide them. One area in particular where this occurred was along the Great West Road running through Middlesex -

‘...a handsome group of factories, with concrete facades, but standing back from the main road in gardens...we pass those of Brittol, Coty, Armstrong, Saurer, Packard, and the Pyrene Fire Extinguisher ...the Firestone Rubber Company, MacLean’s of toothpaste fame...the Gillette Safety Razor Company...’<sup>654</sup>



Fig 151  
Hoover factory, Western Avenue, Perivale 1931  
Source: Bowdler 1999

This was an area that came to epitomise the new manufacturing, symbolic not just in their ‘modern’ products, but for their splendidly designed assembly plants and distribution points.<sup>655</sup> The factories producing the domestic consumables had become as famous, if

<sup>654</sup> Clunn H (c1946?) *The face of the Home Counties* p 36

<sup>655</sup> Stamp G (ed) (c1930?) *Britain in the Thirties* p105; Benton et al p257

not more so, than the homes they were eventually equipping. This was the landscape that J.B. Priestley claimed as - '... the Third England...the newest England.'<sup>656</sup>

Increased consumption linked to wide ranging advertising greatly increased demand and production, the very factory hands with steady and increasing wages became the targets of builders and building societies, advertisements encouraging saving, leading to home buying and thus consumption of home fitments. Throughout the interwar period the increasing standardisation of fittings in housing and the reduction in size to fit in the economical new housing ran in parallel with increasingly ubiquitous designs and brands, such that the brand came to supersede the generic product. Eponymously, the vacuum cleaner became Hoover, the carpet sweeper, Ewbank, the carpet they jointly cleaned, Axminster, the hot water systems, Ascot.

## 8.1

### A Garden Foray



Fig 152

Ideal Home 1938

The idyllic 'chocolate box' image of the country garden was adapted to the burgeoning suburbs.

Source: Ideal Home magazine July 1938 <sup>657</sup>

<sup>656</sup> Priestley p401

<sup>657</sup> *The Ideal Home* 1938 v38n1 cover

Flower beds and lawns were an exterior aspect of the interior world of suburbia. The garden was as much a target for suburban expansion and spending as any interior, and the new housing, unlike the urban terraces formerly seen as 'home', was accessed through a garden and path that was on public view. The rapid growth of suburban housing, each with its two gardens, was a fruitful area of printed information, either in the press or as instructional booklets; the new suburbanites often with their first garden were plied with advice -

'Great care and pains are taken by the home builder to have his plans so made that everything pertaining to the appearance of the house is just as desired. The lady of the house takes extra pains to have the house furnishings to her particular liking. But how seldom are any plans made for the outside appearance and general surroundings. Plan your garden when planning your house. A well laid out garden adds tremendously to the value of a home besides being a beauty spot for the wife and family...an out of door recreation for the businessman in his leisure hours.'<sup>658</sup>

The neatly mown lawn, the shop window of the suburban dwelling, required a mower, a push type in small plots, and a petrol-driven ATCO in larger gardens. Manufacturers were not slow to recognise this and many old established agricultural machinery makers such as Ransomes turned to a smaller-scale product to cut the grass of countless lawns, tiny suburban meadows, and somewhere to sit and enjoy, as Betjeman put it - '...the six o'clock news and a lime-juice and gin'.<sup>659</sup> In the 21<sup>st</sup> century it has been noted by the editor of *Country Life* that -

'It was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that they unrolled their green carpets across domestic life, the square of green in front of and behind the house being as much a part of the new suburbs as the privet hedge and the sunburst front door.'

This view of the lawn is supported by Colls' view that -

'(the) well swept avenues and striped green lawns came to be seen as the heart of England itself.'<sup>660</sup>

The lawn was not the sole occupier of the domestic exterior space, although it might be dominant as a frontage, the rear of the property saw a division of land whereby the area of the back garden adjacent to the house might be lawn or flower beds, the area furthest away was the landscape of a more utilitarian nature of vegetables, compost heaps and that

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<sup>658</sup> Holmes TC and Hay RE (1936) *The gardeners handbook* p1

<sup>659</sup> Betjeman p105

<sup>660</sup> Aslet C 'Taking pride in surfing the turf' D. Telegraph 1.6.2010; Colls R (2002) *Identity of England* pp217-218

male suburb within a suburb, the garden shed.<sup>661</sup> This was an age when Modernism was all, and linked to that era was the 'Mechanical Age' a concept that Dennis, the Guildford-based mower manufacturers, were at pains to inculcate into the newly suburbanising public as noted in a 1924 advert -

'The present is the Mechanical Age. Every labour-saving device is not only an individual economy, it makes for general efficiency. The self-propelled vehicle sweetens travel and cheapens transport; the self-propelled lawn mower makes grass-cutting a pleasure...' <sup>662</sup>

Adequate seating for such delights as the lawn [or the lime juice and gin] was required; one specialised form of this was from a firm of ship breakers in Blyth, Northumberland who produced 'Battleship' garden furniture in prime Rangoon teak, from dismantled warships.<sup>663</sup> This style of domestic rusticity had its opponents and a quote from the review of the 1934 Ideal Home Exhibition made a modernist tilt to the trend -

'Another presence from which no section offers escape is that of quaint rustic seats and garden benches. Perhaps these innumerable sham wine-casks and wobbly lengths of artily stained tree-trunks were the flotsam and jetsam salvaged from a modern luxury liner that foundered through excessive olde-worldliness.' <sup>664</sup>

In view of the origin of the Blyth garden furniture noted above an ironic comment.

The new housewife had a range of duties, one of which was, according to *The Housewife's Book 1937*, the upkeep of the garden furniture - 'The simplest way of doing this, is to paint it...' <sup>665</sup> In Patcham, a Ladies Mile Estate brochure noted -

'Five hundred houses are to be built with ample space for a delightful garden.' <sup>666</sup>

Elsewhere in the brochure, gardens were described as -

'Average size of plot 22ft by 110ft, which is enclosed by a fence. Steel coal bunker and dustbin are placed outside the back door.' <sup>667</sup>

Jackson noted that while gardens were seen by developers as an essential part of the suburban package, little attention was paid to the layout -

'Although there would have been little or no extra cost, no builder seems to have

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<sup>661</sup> Oliver et al p142

<sup>662</sup> Fort.T (2001) *The grass is greener: our love affair with the lawn* p230

<sup>663</sup> *The Ideal Home* (July 1938) p48

<sup>664</sup> Dennison B *Design for Today* (in Cranfield p 84)

<sup>665</sup> *The Housewife's Book 1937* p 147-8

<sup>666</sup> *Downland Homes by the Sea* (c1934?) p4

<sup>667</sup> *LME* brochure (c1933?) p18



thought of adding interest to the gardens by providing interlaced plots or irregular shapes...fences were frequently skimped. Cheap softwood or chicken-wire strung between poorly galvanised stakes, were considered adequate to divide plots.<sup>668</sup>

At 143 Mackie Avenue, Patcham, Mrs Darling saw this element as a positive feature - 'It was all wire mesh fences originally, you could see everybody.'<sup>669</sup> This was at some variance to Stephenson who noted that the back garden was of a different nature, being more private and being screened by high weatherboard fencing.<sup>670</sup> Front gardens were better bordered, Jackson records -

'...boundaries were established by low walls up to six courses of bricks or crazy stones sometime topped by wooden posts carrying ornamental iron chains.'<sup>671</sup>

George Clift grew up in Barrhill Avenue, one of the earliest roads on the Ladies Mile Estate, west of Mackie Avenue; he recalled his front garden having those chains but that they were removed in World War Two for war-salvage.<sup>672</sup> Elsewhere on the estate many of the low stone walls still survive, fronting several front gardens, although as the detail in the architects plans for Braeside Avenue clearly indicates they are in fact - 'Imitation stone'<sup>673</sup> (fig 153); the low walls allowed the gardens to be seen by passers-by.<sup>674</sup>

Elizabeth Jenner recalls her childhood Patcham garden -

'All had wrought iron gates, identical, taken for war salvage. All had stone walls, all beautiful, white or creamy coloured stone.'<sup>675</sup>

Opportunities to lure the new residents into suburban domestic spending were not wasted and two local firms placed half page adverts in the Ladies Mile Estate brochures; Lumley and Hunt Ltd of Hove proclaimed -

'Having bought your house you will no doubt make the most of your garden. There we can help you. We keep comprehensive stocks of spades, forks, hoes, rakes, garden hose and taps, as well as crazy paving, garden ornaments, rustic arches, seats etc. We deliver on this estate daily.'<sup>676</sup>

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<sup>668</sup> Jackson p 124

<sup>669</sup> Darling pers.comm 18.7.2005

<sup>670</sup> Stephenson p36

<sup>671</sup> Jackson p125

<sup>672</sup> Clift pers.comm 31.7.2009

<sup>673</sup> BHBC NB X236

<sup>674</sup> Stephenson p34

<sup>675</sup> Elizabeth Jenner. pers.comm.5.4.2004

<sup>676</sup> LME p30

For those either too ignorant of gardening techniques or with more money to spend, C. Jenking and Sons, landscape gardeners of Warleigh Rd Brighton, were offering themselves as -

‘Specialists in the Design and Construction of gardens of all sizes. We are prepared to inspect and design any type of garden in Town or Country.’<sup>677</sup>

The suburban love of the garden inspired a canon of contemporary literature, some practical as in *The Home of Today* -

‘The Home Gardener will need to supply himself with certain necessary equipment. Needless to say, this should be of the best quality.’<sup>678</sup>

Other volumes took on a more light-weight tone - *Garden Rubbish*, *Green Fingers* and *More Green Fingers*.<sup>679</sup>



Fig 153  
69-71 Mackie Avenue, Ladies Mile Estate  
Source: author's own image.10.8.2004

Building permission granted 25 January 1934<sup>680</sup>  
Showing low brick and imitation stone walls.

<sup>677</sup> LME p30

<sup>678</sup> *The Home of Today* p 547

<sup>679</sup> Sellar WC and Yeatman RJ (1936) *Garden Rubbish*; Arkell R (1934) *Green Fingers*; Arkell R (1938) *More Green Fingers*

<sup>680</sup> BHBC NB 9568/1

The internal appearance of the interwar dwelling reflected as much as the external the changing social and economic landscape of the suburb. The smaller homes, the single family occupancy, the new technology of electricity, bringing radio, and in some exclusive homes, television, into the home, all were reflected in the features noted above. The Mock Tudor exteriors were mirrored in the electric log fires and fake candle illumination of the family lounge. For every chrome and neon-lit urban cocktail lounge there were scores of Brewers' Tudor pubs appearing on suburban parades, their internal appearance being one of stained glass windows, oak panelled bars and, in the King and Queen, Brighton - a minstrels' gallery.

As much as the exteriors, the interiors of the suburban homes exemplified the key themes of this thesis; the 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban interior layout was not too far removed from its predecessors. Reading *'The Diary of a Nobody'*, the illustrations and accounts of the Pooters' lifestyle in 1890s' Holloway were not so different from the television families of countless situation comedies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This continuity had accompanying it the technological changes of interwar South East England; an aspect explored extensively by Oliver et al in *'Dunroamin'*. Each interior and each garden were reflections of their occupancy, exhibiting the full range of suburban diversity. As technology and suburban styles evolved, the housing was changing to reflect the wider world of 1930s' society. The 1920s' army huts of asbestos roofs and paraffin lamps had, within a scant period spawned a suburbia of 'Hollywood Moderne' bungalows containing electric cookers and television power points.

The following chapter takes the study away from the documented past to a 'ghost land', a landscape of schemes proposed and abandoned. As with many ghost stories or fantasy schemes there are germs of truth somewhere contained within. My own street was part of a proposed pre-war private housing scheme that changed after the Second World War into a local authority housing project, where the street names were altered and road plans adapted to changing patterns of landownership and new local government strictures.

## Chapter 9

Patcham: the landscape that never was.



Fig 154

1928 planning proposals map (detail)

Source: Brighton, Hove and District Joint Town Planning Advisory Committee <sup>681</sup>

The plan for greater Brighton; Patcham with major new roads, housing in Waterhall valley to the west and in Standean valley to the north, with Eastwick Bottom and Westdene as green spaces. None of this actually materialised; however by 1991 the Brighton by-pass ran very close to Route 12.

As has been shown earlier in this thesis there are a set of key themes which are central to the understanding of the Patcham landscape and its evolution from agriculture to suburbia; now in this chapter the ‘ghost land’ of Patcham’s unfulfilled schemes will be examined. The contemporary suburb has a certain aspect that lends its situation a surreal quality, sitting as it does on the edge of the city, Janus-like, with one face looking into the city, the other face looking out to the rural surrounds, the landscape

<sup>681</sup> Brighton, Hove and District Joint Town Planning Advisory Committee; preliminary report 1928. (BHDJTP) Insert map.

that the suburb subsumed. The suburb absorbs both aspects and exhibits their characteristics in a variety of forms, but exhibits only those characteristics which emanated from successful ventures. What of the unsuccessful? The history of any suburb is one composed of the dreams of the inhabitants. HD Davis who grew up on Sweet Hill, recalled the archetypal suburban dream in his memoir -

‘For some the ownership of land meant an answer to submerged desires to get away from terraced houses in the town. To exchange crowded living by space and fresher air. More than ever the call of complete freedom to do as they pleased had immediate appeal’<sup>682</sup>

A new life, free of the cramped world of the inner city flat or shared rooms, the first step on a property ladder or an investment in and for the future. Dreams are not reality and the suburb contains only those that are realised. Mr Davis’ parents’ dream was not realised. What of the suburb that ‘might have been’? The early postwar colony of Sweet Hill, in effect a suburban component of the wider Patcham suburb, was settled by families trying a new start after a devastating world war, their dream was described in a typewritten document submitted to the House of Lords, in an attempt to stem Brighton Corporation’s moves to clear the settlement from the hill. An anonymous collection of papers forming part of a personal archive of one of the few settlements that survives on the hill. In 1924 the plotlanders petition outlined one such dream -

‘...many of the holders are ex-service men who have fought and bought with blood their right to a stake in the country. Our sentimental side of the matter in having the pleasure of our own freeholds, little places whereon after the turmoil of the last few years we may settle down in peace and security as our own masters until the end of our days.’<sup>683</sup>

Similarly HD Davis states -

‘The wind swept downs fostered many dreams. Most of them thwarted by lack of the required skills...my father had ideas of self-sufficiency.’<sup>684</sup>

The Brighton Water Bill 1924, put paid to the Sweet Hill colony, families were ‘re-settled’ and homes abandoned, eventually to be cleared; the Sweet Hill dream vanished in the face of Corporation bureaucracy. Had the colony survived, its appearance would in all probability have mirrored that of other plotlands that evolved into more structured suburbia, as has occurred in local examples at Peacehaven and Woodingdean and further afield at Binley Woods, Warwickshire.

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<sup>682</sup> Davis p1

<sup>683</sup> Petition (b)1924

<sup>684</sup> Davis p1



In a curious way this briefly existing plotland colony does evoke thoughts of continuity and change; the very place-name - Sweet Hill - is a continuity from previous centuries as it is listed in the Tithe Survey 1842. Its short flowering saw the change from agriculture to plotland and a return within a short period to its rural origins. Its role as a component in the lifecycle of the wider suburb is assured albeit bereft of most of its domestic structures. As such it is a ghostly example of the diversity of suburbia; a position which becomes apparent with the perspective of time. The 'shack-and-track' that becomes the subject of academic research.

The existing urban fringes of many British cities preserve this plotland inheritance, often now hidden within the evolving suburban landscape; the recession of the 1930s and subsequent wartime and postwar building restrictions have left many of these areas as 21<sup>st</sup> century urban fringes, a position that the original settlers would have found difficult to envisage such was the speed of urban growth at the time. Suburban schemes evolved throughout the interwar, often from the imaginative publicity of the developers; how the landscape of Patcham would have looked if even some of these projects had come to fruition is a moot point. Sweet Hill is portrayed in the contemporary cartographic evidence as possessing wide roads, named with bucolic irony as Green Dene, Furze Hill and South View; the reality was a collection of chalk and cinder tracks with a scattering of huts and poultry sheds.

There is always danger in this 'what-if' approach, but there are some existing documents that suggest possibilities. The plans submitted in 1928 by the Brighton, Hove and District Joint Town Planning Advisory Committee, which were largely unexecuted, foundered for a variety of reasons, one being the 1929 monetary crisis and another the reluctance of the smaller administrative areas to be taken into Brighton's municipal ambit. The inserted map is titled - 'Map showing preliminary suggestions' - but most of these were not taken up; the area designated for housing in the plan was in a different form to that which actually occurred, planned housing areas are depicted in the Standean valley north of Patcham and in the Waterhall valley south of Sweet Hill; this was an attempt to keep within Brighton Council's ideas on building restrictions above the 200 ft. contour.<sup>685</sup> A retrospective view is that this

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<sup>685</sup> *Downland homes by the sea* (c1934?) p2

suggested expansion is balanced by Eastwick Bottom (Mackie Avenue) and the area now Westdene, west of the study area, shown as green spaces, which were built on. One of the proposals in the plan for the Patcham area included an airfield; to be part of an air-taxi service that would ring the conurbation, with a prior airfield on Ladies Mile, this could have happened. The expansion and rebuilding of Shoreham aerodrome, nine miles to the west but outside the plan area would have been part of this Modern approach; Patcham with its 'Moderne' image and open spaces would have been a strong contender for a similar site, as was noted in the Preliminary Report

'...the possibilities of the light aeroplane...will considerably influence and increase the popularity of the area for residential purposes.'<sup>686</sup>



Fig 155

Patcham potential...? Shoreham Aerodrome opening day June 13<sup>th</sup> 1936  
Source Shoreham Airport archive

Part of the 1928 plan was for a major new road system encircling the conurbation to the north with an outer and inner ring-road, in effect a bypass, planned along almost the same route as the A27 Brighton bypass that eventually opened in 1992. A further proposal was for a 'Parkway' to run along the South Downs crest. The original inner road was mapped to loop north behind Patcham -

'This link would probably follow the lower portion of Vale Avenue and then proceed north of the Ladies Mile Estate...'<sup>687</sup>

<sup>686</sup> BHDJTP p51

<sup>687</sup> BHDJTP viii b2

This must have been a strong influence on Ferguson's forward planning for the area, access to an arterial road being a positive feature of interwar housing projects. The land for a link road from Ladies Mile to the 'new road' (confusingly the third 'new road' thus named in the area) was only built over in the early 1960s.

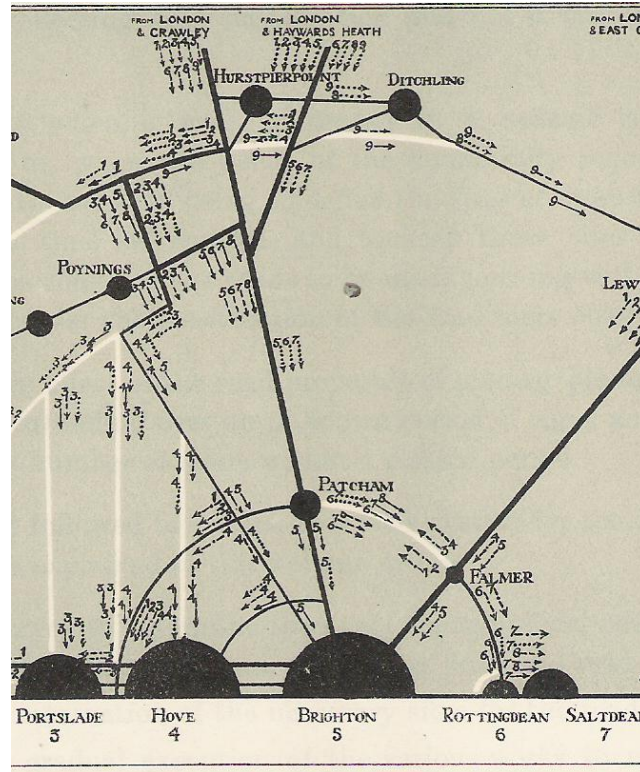


Fig 156

Road proposals 1932 (detail)

Source: Brighton History Centre. Brighton Museum <sup>688</sup>

Air travel and new road schemes were not the only transport innovation planned for Patcham; a 1931 Brighton Gazette article - '...recommends the reservation of sites for stations at Patcham ...'<sup>689</sup> A year later the 1932 Preliminary Report noted -

'Consideration of reserving a site for a railway station at Patcham to serve this area [which] will no doubt continue to develop and the desirability of reserving a site for a station...should be considered at an early date.'<sup>690</sup>

The LME estate brochure c1932 states -

<sup>688</sup> BHDJTP p45

<sup>689</sup> BG 18.7.1931 p7

<sup>690</sup> BHDJTP p43

‘London is brought to within 50 minutes of Ladies Mile Estate by the opening of Patcham Station, which is already on the programme of the Southern Railway’s electrification scheme.’<sup>691</sup>

A railway station was planned for an area near the London Road below the eastern side of Sweet Hill near the junction with Mill Road; the plan outlines the thought processes behind the decided location -

‘The most advantageous site for a railway station at Patcham would appear to be in the neighbourhood of Mill Road...it will thus be advantageous and economical for the local station traffic also to be concentrated on this point.’

By the LME brochure c1934, a map showed a proposed railway station in an area opposite the south end of Old London Road; it was never carried through. Eventually land was acquired opposite the western end of Carden Avenue; unexploited, British Rail only disposed of the site for housing in the 1970s, yet in 1987 as plans were finalised for the A27 by-pass a local newspaper revived the plan for a station at the highway interchange. Ironically the 1932 site is one under consideration for a Parkway station to link with a Park-and-Ride site in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>692</sup>

Its location as an urban fringe ensured Patcham was seen as a suitable depository for a raft of municipal projects, as early as March 1923 the planning committee of SERDC was reviewing a request by the Inspector of Nuisances to rent -

‘...about an acre of land on the Small Holdings in Carden Avenue, preferably at the southern end for the purpose of affording facilities to the Council to effectively deal with the contents of the Bexley cart.’<sup>693</sup>

Two months later the Minutes record -

‘A letter received from Brighton town council stating that they do not consider it advisable to let land to the council on the Corporation Small Holding estate for the purposes of depositing the contents of the Bexley cart. Resolved that enquiries be made as to other available land in the parish of Patcham which can be utilised for the purpose referred to.’<sup>694</sup>

In spite of extensive enquiry the function of the Bexley cart has not been ascertained, it is suggested here that it was the means of transfer for cess-pit contents. No other

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<sup>691</sup> *Ladies Mile Estate* c1932 np

<sup>692</sup> *Ladies Mile Estate* c1934 p8; *Evening Argus* 11.8.1987 p6; *Argus* 21.0.2007

<sup>693</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 13.3.1923 p204

<sup>694</sup> ESRO DM/A1/1 8.5.1923 p224

reference, archival or anecdotal, to this scheme has been discovered. Many other such schemes foundered in the face of planning committees or local opposition. In 1931 -

‘...[the] Health Ministry turned down a mental hospital scheme [owing to] expense and proximity to Brighton.’<sup>695</sup>

Within Patcham there were other ‘lost’ aspects of the suburb; at the Mackie Sports Club in Mackie Avenue there was a planned - but sadly never built - swimming pool, shown on an estate map as lying west of the present bowling greens. Further east along Mackie Avenue by the open space of Plainfields, the same LME map of c1936 shows a school and a church site along its northern side; a plan in an ESRO archive dated 1936 shows this land as unbuilt, both sites were in fact built as bungalows in 1937 after Ferguson had left Patcham.<sup>696</sup> Ferguson’s desire to create a modern community at Ladies Mile - a modern ‘village’ - was apparent from the speculative map, and he did later develop Hassocks Garden Village north of the Downs in 1936. The addition of a school and church - never mentioned in any of the LME publicity prior to this - added to the sports facilities and shopping parades. Could it have been the increasing secularity of the ‘modern’ interwar years that pushed the church to an afterthought or was it his Plymouth Brethren beliefs? The old parish church of All Saints is a considerable distance from the eastern part of LME and no Church of England establishment was built until Christ the King appeared in neighbouring Braybon Avenue in a temporary building in February 1939.<sup>697</sup> Ferguson did build a hall in Mackie Avenue adjacent to the sports club, which he donated to the Plymouth Brethren, however a disagreement over future funding brought on a characteristic Ferguson rage and he gave the Brethren hall to the Church of England...but no church. The Methodists had started their church in Harold Stockley’s front room in Craignair Avenue before relocating to the Drove Barn in Ladies Mile Road in 1935.<sup>698</sup>

Perth Avenue which appears on the final LME brochure map, was another casualty of circumstance in that there was insufficient space left at the east end of Eastwick Bottom to fit it in; the initial plan was to incorporate Eastwick Barn, a large vernacular flint structure in Braeside Avenue, however for reasons undiscovered Ferguson could not buy it and the road had to twist south, thus losing the land for the

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<sup>695</sup> BHH 10.1.1931 p17

<sup>696</sup> ESRO DB/B88/1/27; BHBC file cards

<sup>697</sup> Langley A and Shipley B (1989) *Church of Christ the King, South Patcham-a history and guide* p2

<sup>698</sup> *Sussex Daily News* 18.6.1936



prospective Perth Avenue. East of this point a triangular open space at the far end of Mackie Avenue is outlined which was lost also.<sup>699</sup>

One of the abiding images of interwar Britain was that of the luxury cinemas, the Odeons and Gaumonts, and was an image conjured up by JB Priestly in 1934 as typical of his Third England - 'giant cinemas and dance-halls and cafes.'<sup>700</sup>

Brighton had an important role in the design and construction of the super-cinemas as they were termed and the Regent, Astoria and Savoy were acknowledged front-runners of the genre. There were 26 cinemas in Brighton and Hove by 1938 but few in the suburbs, although the cinema as a suburban symbol was plentiful in the London suburbs with existing examples in Richmond, Esher and Muswell Hill.<sup>701</sup> However Patcham's position as a large and forward looking housing area meant that entrepreneurs considered it a suitable venue for one such, and a site adjacent to The Elms shopping parade at the junction of Ladies Mile Road and Old London Road opposite the large Co-op building was chosen as the site in 1951, according to the Building Control records; however Dudley Barrowcliff and Peter Holland who both grew up in Patcham in the late 1930s recalled - '[The site was] excavated before the war for a cinema'.<sup>702</sup> It was never built and the site was developed as flats in 1962.

By the late interwar the notion of the suburb as an unplanned sprawl on the urban fringe was being refined by the work of both the developers - the appearance of the Old Mill Estate attests to this - but also to the group of concerned polemicists noted by Matless as the 'Planner Preservationists'. These latter according to Matless-

"...placed themselves in a middle ground built out of negotiations between tradition and modernity via fitness for purpose."<sup>703</sup>

The work of this body can be exemplified by the approach of Patrick Abercrombie whose 1945 Greater London Plan and earlier County of London Plan -

"...show how regionalism, urbanism and preservationist ruralism could combine yet could also generate tensions over what should happen to the country."<sup>704</sup>

<sup>699</sup> *Downland homes by the sea*. (c1936) Endpaper map

<sup>700</sup> Priestley p401

<sup>701</sup> *Kellys 1938* p1242-43; Eyles A (2001) *Old cinemas* p30-31

<sup>702</sup> BHBC file cards; D.Barrowcliff pers.comm 8.3.2006; P.Holland pers.comm. 5.7.2006

<sup>703</sup> Matless p212

<sup>704</sup> Matless p204

Abercrombie's aim was to ensure that the urban fringe areas were 'tidied up' and rounded off with appropriate use of green-belts, a concept that went with his CPRE ruralism. It is appropriate that Abercrombie's mentor, Patrick Geddes, lived at Newtimber Place less than four miles from Patcham, in the adjoining parish. The 'new-age' of postwar planning stretched across the priority areas of New Town construction and post-Blitz renewal to the construction of housing in non-Metropolitan areas, partly as a continuation of the pre-war slum clearances and partly as a response to the new spirit of these Planner Preservationists. Housing was no longer the Mock Tudor timbering of the interwar suburb; the new estates were a reflection of the New Age.

The appearance of the postwar New Towns owed much to this approach, with the housing design filtering down to smaller schemes of reconstruction that appeared across Britain in the euphoria of the postwar building boom. The housing that was being erected in response to the wartime destruction and to the new standards of the planned New Towns became as much a symbol of the later 1940s as the 'Tudorbethan' was to the 1930s. The use of pre-fabricated sections and of the lessons learnt in the assembly-line production that had facilitated wartime industrial production ensured a homogeneity of design such as had been noted at an earlier period in the century. As an example of this, the postwar Patcham housing estate of Hollingbury illustrates features that can be discerned throughout postwar Britain. As with much else in the built landscape the origins of the estate lie much earlier than the actual house building. A document in the ESRO archive for an area nominated Withdean Estate East, a Braybon proposal, shows the pattern of roads between the London Road and Ditchling Road.<sup>705</sup> This was already being constructed in 1938-39 but ceased with the war; the housing in Wilmington Way shows an abrupt change between the pre-war and post-war styles. In 1946 the land not built upon, north of Woodbourne Avenue, was acquired by Brighton Corporation and the Hollingbury council estate and factories area was constructed. The open northern area on fig.158 was Paine estate land - Little Down - acquired by Brighton in 1909 and used as 146 smallholdings and for other urban fringe activities, until incorporated in the postwar

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<sup>705</sup> ESRO DB/D27/41 Street naming plan Messrs Braybons Ltd 17 11 1937 (with additions 4 4 1938)

social housing project. A local source records housing figures for this area of the borough - 'Hollingbury-1,200 planned. Contracts out for 539. Six completed.'<sup>706</sup>

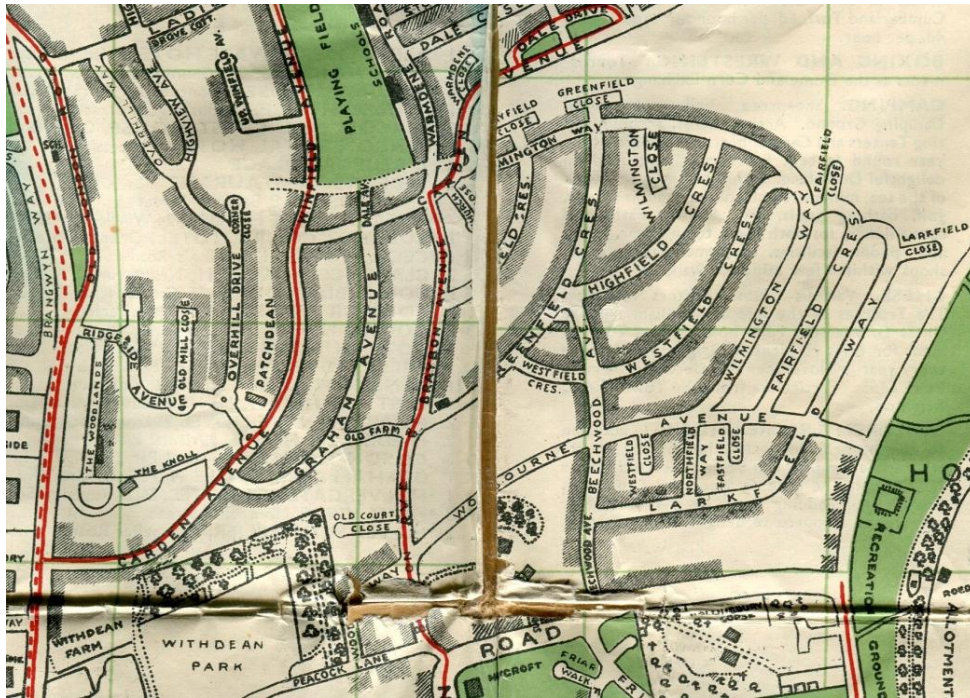


Fig 157

Patcham 1945. The transition from Braybon corporate to Brighton Corporation.  
Source: Brighton and Hove map and guide [detail].

The street layout as represented here is that from the original 1937 plans with the Braybon Ltd naming for roads. The 1946 council estate which was created here adapted and extended the housing beyond the three eastern roads, which here are shown as unbuilt. Fairfield Crescent was renamed Hartfield Avenue and my house was built on the mid-western side the following year.

The continuity of the housing schemes of the interwar had their origins in the pre-development landownership pattern, the change came about as bricks and mortar replaced arable lands, market gardens and flocks. The 'ghost' schemes were, in their planning, a direct link to the prior landownership and as such would have fitted into the lifecycle of the area's housing; although some schemes never materialised, others were refinements or adaptations of earlier plans, some part of the larger palimpsest of the Patcham landscape, others dramatic landscape changes, adding to the sheer diversity that all and any suburb exhibits.

<sup>706</sup> ESRO AMS 3434 ESRO DB/D/88/3/17; *Brighton and Hove Gazette yearbook - cavalcade of 1947-1948* p53

There are indications of other suburban areas having such ‘ghost schemes’, an arterial road in SW London that ends in a Surrey field near Chertsey being but one; however little research in this subject appears to be recorded.<sup>707</sup>

The intriguing thing about these speculated but unfulfilled suburban plans is that without detailed trawling through local press reports and developers’ literature, there is no way of knowing just how many such projected schemes there were. My own street as example would seem to originate in 1947 if use is made of local government records and Kelly’s Directories; however my research has found its origins to be the Braybon plans of 1937. Thus exemplifying Professor WG Hoskins’ wise words that -

‘Everything in the landscape is older than we think!’<sup>708</sup>

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<sup>707</sup> [www.sabre.roads/forum](http://www.sabre.roads/forum)[accessed 12.6.2012]

<sup>708</sup> Hoskins WG (1973) *English Landscapes* p6

## Chapter 10

## Conclusion

‘After my work in the city, I like to be at home.  
What’s the good of home if you are never in it?’

*The Diary of a Nobody* (1892) <sup>708</sup>



Fig.158  
Patcham from Woodbourne Avenue c1950  
Source: Peter Booth collection

This view north into suburban Patcham from the newly built Hollingbury estate would have been of agricultural land 20 years previously. The success of British planning policies has ensured that this suburban scene would be essentially unchanged in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the distant Ladies Mile Estate still the city’s northern border.

This thesis started with my stating that I was a child of the suburbs, this positioned me very much as an interested party, the more so as the view from my Hollingbury hill-top means I can view a large portion of my study area each day. With this in mind the theme of this work has been to analyse one small part of the enormous suburban growth that occurred in Britain between the wars and from that study to place the local in the national context, but also to trace some themes common to much British

<sup>708</sup> Grossmith and Grossmith p13



suburban growth. JWR Whitehand in the preface to *'Twentieth century Suburbs: a morphological approach'* identified a theme that was of great import to this study, the lack of analytical study of suburbia -

‘It is paradoxical that both the population at large and those with a scholarly or professional interest in cities often know less about the familiar and recurrent aspects of the built environment than about its unusual features...relatively little is known about the ordinary residential areas ...of the bulk of the population, in the case of suburban development in England the relative lack of research is the more remarkable...’<sup>709</sup>

It was this major lacuna that he sought to fill and what has been attempted here for one Brighton suburb. The historical geography of Patcham, its continuity and change over time has taken a course of development that is at one and the same time, typical of UK suburban development but also unique in its particularities. Earlier in this thesis the historic antecedents of the study area were analysed, from the push of appalling urban housing conditions and population pressure in Brighton, to the pull of available, accessible land and reduced construction costs in mass housing schemes. Whilst there were suggested and aborted projects as discussed above, the broad pattern of its housing was one that could be discerned in the shape, form and style as that encountered across the length and breadth of Britain.

The large scale housing developments of Ferguson and Braybon, indeed the single dwellings of the 1920s or the earlier Edwardian and Victorian villas, were local manifestations of the London suburbs or the new Manchester estates, a point observed in the 1945 preface to that early paean to suburban life, *'The Diary of a Nobody'* -

‘The Holloway of where Mr Pooter flourished is no longer the resort of substantial householders...but fifty years ago it was as thoroughly the core of suburban life as Tooting or Burnt Oak or Wythenshaw are today.’<sup>710</sup>

Urban change is constant and the ending of this research period in 1939 is far from the end; the post-World War Two development can be seen as a logical extension of the pre-war story with the war as a short interruption. As central government policies throughout the interwar had influence on the scale and style of housing erected, so the change to a Labour government in 1945 had a similar effect. The programme of Brighton slum clearance that had progressed steadily throughout the interwar had to

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<sup>709</sup> Whitehand and Carr 2001 vii

<sup>710</sup> Grossmith and Grossmith p8

be stepped up, with the added element of extensive wartime damage to housing stock, yet another vast assemblage of returning servicemen expecting ‘Homes for Heroes’ and the public expectation for change; and there was a determination not to repeat the errors of the post-World War One administrations. With central planning deemed to have been a success in World War Two, ideas of town planning, of urban renewal, and environmental protection materialised as the New Towns Act, Town and Country Planning Act and National Parks Act. Town and Country Planning had in fact become a ministerial post in 1942 with the Conservative W.Morrison as its first post holder.<sup>711</sup>

The possibilities of the unexecuted proposals and plans for Patcham can be postulated from those that did actually progress to fruition. But there is another aspect of the Patcham story which must be considered, which is that there were postwar developments that added to the housing picture but which lay outside the time and areal extent of this study. The succession of Patcham housing continued with what were pre-war links to postponed projects; east of the Carden Avenue Estate the first corporation housing erected under the new Labour government was being constructed in a road network centred on Midhurst Rise, almost an exact copy of the Braybon housing adjacent; it must be presumed that this would have been an extension of the Braybon scheme taken under municipal control; 152 houses and flats were completed here in 1947-48. Various accounts refer to the work being undertaken by German and Italian prisoners of war awaiting repatriation; similar labour was utilised by Hove Corporation in the contemporaneous Sunninghill Estate at Hangleton.<sup>712</sup> It has been noted above (fig 158) that the Hollingbury council housing was an adaptation and expansion of a pre-war Braybon scheme for part of the area, following on from the Midhurst Rise building. The war had brought minor damage to the area, crashed allied and German planes; a stick of bombs fell across the Carden Avenue and Portfield Avenue area, demolishing two houses on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1944; the same attack destroyed a bungalow in Glenfalls Avenue on the LME.<sup>713</sup>

West of the study area on the hill slopes of Withdean there was another area that had seen incipient private housing in the 1920s and the start of a Braybon estate in the

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<sup>711</sup> Butler and Butler (1986) p29

<sup>712</sup> *Brighton and Hove Gazette yearbook: Cavalcade of 1947-1948* p53, p180; R.Grant pers.comm 18.6.2009

<sup>713</sup> D.Rowland pers.comm 25.6.2010; E.Jenner pers.comm 5.4.2004

1930s. Local government contracts to complete the much needed postwar council housing tied building firms up for almost the next decade, but by the mid-1950s the change to a Conservative administration had seen restraints on private building eased and Braybors recommenced on the upper slopes of Withdean leading up to its summit at Red Hill adjacent to the Patcham windmill. This latter area took a new appellation as Westdene and is a fine example of postwar middle class housing.

The large villas that lined the London Road valley bottom succumbed to 20<sup>th</sup> century redevelopment and blocks of flats replaced the earlier built landscape [seen in fig 14] as early as 1938, with the demolition of Hatch Beauchamp.<sup>714</sup> Later 20<sup>th</sup> century projects saw continuation of the demolitions, the villas being replaced with housing estates and low rise flats such as Kingsmere, previously St Johns and Woodslee villas.<sup>715</sup> The process continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with plans to tear down six family homes in Carden Avenue and build a luxury care home.<sup>716</sup> Within the ambit of the village there was infill, Patcham Mews behind the old Black Lion Inn on the site of a small factory and Ladies Mile Court in the yard of the old Unique Coaches depot of Barn Garage. Levetts agricultural merchants sold Patcham Court Barn - the largest in Sussex - which was transformed as an extensive barn conversion. A conservation battle to save Dukes Meadow behind All Saints church from developers was successful in 1989.<sup>717</sup> On the site of the Burntdown Barn at the western end of Carden Avenue, Overhill Gardens was developed in 1963.<sup>718</sup> The open space at the eastern end of Ladies Mile - the 1919 airfield - became the Patcham Fawcett School in 1966<sup>719</sup> but was in turn closed in 1989, demolished in 1994 to be replaced with a dual estate, the housing association Old Boat Walk and the private Windmill View, its near neighbour, geographically, if not socially.<sup>720</sup>

The suburban shopping parades at Ladies Mile and Deeside and Old London Road reflect the changed shopping habits of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Estate agents, ethnic takeaways and empty premises have replaced the grocers, greengrocers, butchers,

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<sup>714</sup> Montford (1996) p12

<sup>715</sup> Montford (1996 ) p9

<sup>716</sup> *Argus* 1.5.2008 p17

<sup>717</sup> *Brighton and Hove Leader* 12.10.1989

<sup>718</sup> BHBC file cards

<sup>719</sup> Collis R *The new encyclopaedia of Brighton* (2010) p301

<sup>720</sup> *Evening Argus* 13.6.1994 p11; *Property News(Evening Argus)* 19.5.94 p9

ironmonger, off-licence, dairy and draper. The draw of the big suburban shopping centres, in Patcham's case on the former Hollingbury industrial site, has reduced the local LME parades to mere shadows of their former self. Only in Old London Road have the twin parades of the modernised Co-op and the decidedly middle class Elms Parade, ensured a diversity of retail and services activity. In a curious throwback to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Patcham village's Old London Road has reverted to its role as the retail heart of the community, with its bakery, tea rooms, Post Office and the half-timbered 'Elizabethan Cottage Tandoori' restaurant; surely the ultimate in the socio-cultural mix of British suburbia and one that nicely twists the chapter heading of Gilbert and Preston - 'Stop being so English' - onto a new level.<sup>721</sup>

It was a feature of the expanding interwar urban fringe to be the harbinger of changes, some of which were welcome - better housing, services and connections to the city, some less so - loss of agricultural land and access to open country, uncontrolled sprawl and inappropriate building styles. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century different scenarios worry the concerned suburban dweller; Patcham's location adjacent to two major trunk roads has led to it being the preferred location for authorised - and many more unauthorised, 'travellers' convoy sites.

'Travellers move on to Pride campsite...the site is occupied by about 20 caravans. A separate 13 caravan encampment has also been set up at the nearby 19 Acres site.'<sup>722</sup>

Appositely, both these sites are adjacent to the former Sweet Hill shack-and-track settlement. Other travellers have also given concern to Patcham; with the creation of the Brighton By-Pass in 1991 the Patcham Court Farm buildings were cut off from their hinterland and the site became derelict, a suitable target for proposers of office complexes, superstores and a highly controversial 'park and ride' scheme. All such projects have failed to materialise and the site remains unoccupied as at mid-2012.<sup>723</sup> A similar scheme for the Braypool site (formerly Bendigo estate) has also roused opposition.

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<sup>721</sup> Gilbert and Preston p187

<sup>722</sup> *Argus* 30.7.2010 p15

<sup>723</sup> *Argus* 14.2.2002 p7 'New lease of life for prime farm site'; *Argus* 21.3.2007 'Offices set for vacant farm site'; *Argus* 9.6.2005 p8 'Two sides split on park and ride'; *Argus* 29.11.2005 'Threat to wildlife, sport and dog walkers'

The aspirational elements of the local populace often have little appreciation of the historic nature of the suburb and with the adoption of 21<sup>st</sup> century features it is gradually losing its interwar appearance; front gardens have been sacrificed to parking areas, resulting in heavy run-off after winter rains, although the phenomenon of ‘garden-grabbing’ - whereby large back garden plots are developed as ‘backland’ housing - seen in many suburban districts and accounting for 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of all new housing in some parts of the country, does not appear to have materialised in Patcham.<sup>724</sup>

The ‘Teapot Brown’ and ‘Matt Green’ Belgian roof tiles of the 1930s can no longer be replaced economically and bland Redland 49 tiles replace them; the Suntrap windows have succumbed to the blandishments of the double-glazing salesman and the Sunburst gates to the ravages of time and weather. Satellite dishes disfigure the exteriors; interwar houses have been demolished to make way for the post-modern of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The roads, designed for the size of cars and traffic flows of the interwar years are choked with parked cars, the driveways and garage spaces unable to absorb the pressure of two and three car households. The wide grass roadside strips within the interwar suburb had a definite purpose, a point noted on housing plans as early as January 1932 before a single LME house was built - ‘...land to be reserved for road widening’, an aspect not carried through, or possibly not known about.<sup>725</sup>

Man-made change is not the only feature of modification from the interwar; as recently as the summer of 2010 the elm trees that give the appellation to ‘The Elms’ shopping parade on Old London Road, were found to have Dutch Elm Disease and were condemned.<sup>726</sup> A natural feature of Patcham’s landscape that pre-dated the time span of this thesis, they have been felled and replaced.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century dilemmas that concern the populace of Patcham are those which this study has shown have been the concerns of the past century. Local newspaper accounts echo the worries of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century -

‘Housing is city’s biggest problem-could we be seeing the end of council housing in Brighton and Hove after more than 100 years.’

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<sup>724</sup> *Patcham Ward Conservative News* p1; *Argus* 21.6.2006 p17; *Daily Telegraph* 9.6.2017 p8

<sup>725</sup> BHBC NB 8924

<sup>726</sup> *The Post* August 2010 pp6-8 ‘Celebrating the elms’



‘Housing needs radical action-how to help thousands of people into decent homes.’

‘Young victims of home shortage. Brighton has been named as one of the most overcrowded places to live in the country.’<sup>727</sup>

This concern over the provision of suitable housing, having beset the resort since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century has created a reaction and headlines such as the following may be seen in newspapers local and national - ‘Disappearing under a blanket of bricks.’

‘Build new homes on green belt, urges think tank.’<sup>728</sup>

Patcham’s 21<sup>st</sup> century appearance is one that can be accurately described as suburban; the adjective, though having a host of meanings both obvious and subliminal, loving and pejorative, is one that can be readily understood by those stalwarts of social commentators - ‘The man in the street’ - or more appositely for this suburban study, that 19<sup>th</sup> century suburban inhabitant - ‘The man on the Clapham omnibus’. Sometimes seen as an object of fun, derision, scorn or general opprobrium, this home of such a large proportion of the UK population can be seen as a microcosm of national life, one that reflects in its history and development the background to the lives and ancestry of millions of people.

In taking the Brighton suburb of Patcham as a vehicle for this study it has been possible to see UK suburban development as a consequence of a series of historical events both international and domestic, national and local, bureaucratic and personal. In taking a block of streets in the parish as a case study, chosen for their logistical and geographical compactness as much as for their architectural and historic interest, it has been possible to trace the historic antecedents of the 21<sup>st</sup> century suburb, the ‘push-pull’ effects of both local and national decision making. The legalistic approach, the local council plans and national policies, the deliberations of local authority sub-committees and of metropolitan legal teams have been tempered by reference to the actuality of these decisions on the day-to-day life of the suburban inhabitants who occupied the newly expanding urban fringe; the breadwinners, housewives, children and the oft-forgotten ‘indigenous’ villagers and shopkeepers whose lives were changed irrevocably by the rapid influx of new inhabitants. First-

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<sup>727</sup> *Argus* 16.11.2005 p8; *Argus* 11.10.2006 p8; *Argus* 12.3.2010 p8

<sup>728</sup> *Argus* 26.7.2007 p8; *Daily Telegraph* 22.8.2008

hand accounts by the early settlers of both the ‘scattered squalor’ colonies and the ‘Downland Homes’ and the anecdotes of their family members, have given colour and largely unrecorded detail to the official record and the architectural plans. While the latter two sources - when surviving - are invaluable tools in reconstructing the past environment, it is the telling phrase and fond memory that lift the account out of the dry bureaucratic phraseology or architectural terminology, into the reality of life in a wooden hut on the windswept wintry downland, or in a newly built semi in a deep downland valley with sheep for neighbours.

The range of scale that the study has covered is linked across a variety of disciplines and themes so that the inter-connectivity can be tracked from domestic artefacts to whole dwellings, from pairs of semi-detached houses to single avenues, to estate and suburb to conurbation, from regionality to national policy and outward to world events. This can be seen to apply through a single example; world-wide patterns of agricultural change, either USA grain production or ‘Empire preference’ foodstuffs brought about a dramatic and long term decline in the UK agricultural economy; as farm incomes declined so the landowners were forced to drop rents; farm labour declined bringing with it not just a drift to the urban areas and to the empire, it also meant farm tasks declined, inefficiencies often followed leading to falling yields. By the First World War the large estates local to Patcham such as those of the Earl of Chichester were selling off land, a process that was continued in the early 1920s. The Abergavenny land sale of 1921 saw large downland blocks sold off, broken into ¼ acre plots by speculators, which were snapped up by builders and, with poorly enforced building regulations, bungalows and cabins spread across downland turf and along main highways in sprawls and ribbons. This caused a reaction, with a tightening of planning controls and a nascent environmental concern for the rapidly changing and often degrading landscapes, both on urban fringes and in more rural areas where examples can be seen at architectural odds with the older vernacular styles.

The demand for the new dwellings was a result of push and pull effects in urban population shifts, and also of changing social and environmental aspirations, of changing social factors such as birth rates and family sizes. The rising population in the urban areas was initially mainly due to rural-urban migration but by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century falling death rates and declining infant mortality, as recorded in the annual

reports of the Brighton Medical Officer of Health, were a more important factor. Government legislation on health, housing and town planning led to greater expectation on the standard and sizes of housing, an expectation that, as the MOH report records in annual detail, was painfully slow to be met.

The wider economic world was an important factor in the urban change of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; as the world-wide recession bit after the First World War, building materials, especially bricks and roofing tiles from Europe were being imported at low cost and their qualities were noted by architects who often stipulated their use. In the South of England the worst effects of the Depression were seldom encountered and the conditions so clearly described by writers such as George Orwell and JB Priestly in the areas of older 'smokestack' industry were largely absent. The greater Brighton area in particular, although seeing some violent activity in the General Strike, was cushioned by its particular local economy. Its role as the major UK resort with extensive leisure and entertainment industries, its position as a major transport hub, the wide range of 'new' industry - food processing, light engineering, electrical engineering and extensive service trades especially retailing and finance, meant that here was a large number of white-collar workers with steady, if low, incomes. These were the targets of property speculators who provided new housing in previously rural areas, benefiting from technological change in transport infrastructure and new methods of housing finance. Later and far larger developers such as Ferguson and Braybon, brought modern building techniques to the local industry, which linked to lower borrowing rates and costs in land, materials and labour were enabled to offer housing that cost less in 1935 than its equivalent 10 years earlier.

The early surge of plotlands that erupted onto the marginal lands around Brighton, the shingle shorelines, bleak cliff tops and thin downland soils were superseded by the late 1920s with individual speculative dwellings or small groups of houses, these in turn were often surrounded or overlapped by the corporate estates of the 1930s. The appearance of these larger schemes and the rate of building, which in the core peaked in 1933, was a major force in the change of Patcham from an agricultural community to a suburban one, with 93 % of the core area housing being built in the four years 1932-36. As the market for the owner-occupied house dried by the later 1930s, and as finance became more difficult to obtain, the building rate declined dramatically such

that by the outbreak of the Second World War there were few houses being constructed in the core area of Patcham, although areas in the periphery - largely in Braybon developments - continued even into 1940.

The outward appearance of the suburban dwellings that forms the vast bulk of the area's housing stock is one that allows for a basic chronology to be produced, one that can be correlated with the changes in national legislation and wider financial sphere. The changes in house design from timber cabins, army huts and Mr Hunwick's 'Steel Tent', through the individual architect designed villas to the corporate designs of Ferguson and Braybon, all reflect changes in costs, materials and popular acceptance of a wide range of new designs - Moderne if not Modern Movement. The interiors and their portals onto the wider world, the windows and doors, similarly were a reflection of the tastes and perceptions of the occupants with the electric light shining through the 'Tudoresque' glazing; the suburban dichotomy of progress and stability in a rapidly changing world. It was the speed of change and the inherent conservatism of house buyers that brought about a particular strain of house design - interior and exterior - that summed up this 'zeitgeist' - an uneasy mix of the modern and the traditional, the electric log-fires, fake oak timbering concealing damp-coursed walls, electric lighting in the form of candelabra.

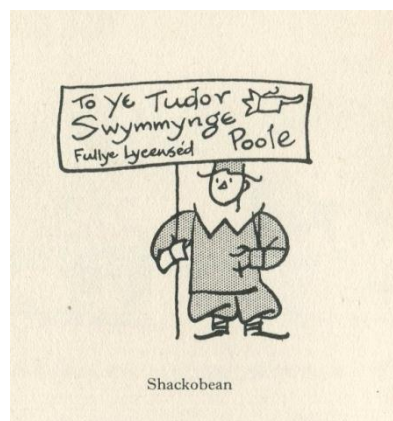


Fig 159  
Shackobean <sup>729</sup>  
Source: 'Fougasse'

Dilemma in style...or life?

<sup>729</sup> Fougasse (1937) *Drawing the line somewhere* p34

In the time of social upheaval, of financial stringency, political crises, constitutional uncertainty and increasing unrest on the Continent there was an hiatus in the popular adoption of design principles; either the 'Brave New World' presented through the work of European architects such as Le Corbusier or Erich Mendelsohn or the opposite end of the architectural spectrum which gave refuge to those who wished to ignore the worst aspects of interwar life and retreat to a supposed Golden Age, one of half-timbered cottages, of craftsmen-worked furniture, of medieval style leaded light windows and stained glass panels depicting galleons in full sail. The ultimate statement on this dichotomy has to be the 1938 Fougasse cartoon (fig 159). In true British compromise, new styles evolved as Georgian Civic redbrick and limestone, or Moderne style white cement rendered walls and Suntrap windows surmounted by a classic pitched roof. The whole best summed up in an advertisement for Amplion wireless sets, where the 1927 radio loud-speaker sits next to a suit of armour and a medieval style stained glass window. (fig 122)

Whitehand and Carr's work on the 20<sup>th</sup> century suburb used the term 'microscale' to delineate the fine detail of selected areas, and their observations on a number of London and Birmingham fringe suburbs presage what this study has discovered on Patcham, the equivalent in terms of Brighton's geography; that the pattern of estates, streets, plots and dwelling types were an outcome of both local and wider factors that were shaping similar areas across the country.<sup>730</sup> Gilbert and Preston make this point -

'The closing years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were marked by a new inflection in the relationship between suburbia and Englishness one that interpreted suburban decline as a bellwether of national decline.'<sup>731</sup>

This is at some variance to the English Heritage view where their 21<sup>st</sup> century perception of suburbs is now more coming to view them as a facet of British townscape, emphasising the historic component they are in the landscape. The English Heritage publication '*Suburbs and the historic environment*' states-

'Many suburbs have become historic through proving their long term sustainability. Not only does this reflect their qualities of popularity, adaptability, stability and general fitness for purpose, but over time they have achieved maturity and distinctiveness in relation to their surrounding area.'<sup>732</sup>

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<sup>730</sup> Whitehand and Carr (2001) p185

<sup>731</sup> Gilbert and Preston p199

<sup>732</sup> *English Heritage* 2007



Suburbs still polarise opinion and a selection of articles in the national press has ranged across the spectrum of concern -

‘New suburbia is an environmental cul-de-sac’  
 ‘Suburban man in Britain has never been happier’  
 ‘The new Tudors. Our love affair with the age of Elizabeth endures, at least in homes that remain desirable today’  
 ‘Bye bye beams. The face of the suburb is changing as comfortable mock-Tudor cottages of the 1930s are torn down in favour of new mini-mansions.’  
 ‘Eco-towns encourage suburban sprawl’  
 ‘More than 80% of us live in suburbs, but for centuries they have been sneered at.’  
 ‘Suburbs neglected as £1bn a year is diverted to inner cities.’<sup>733</sup>

Patcham’s evolution from rural agricultural community, to urban fringe free-for-all, to the epitome of the mixed interwar suburbia and its subsequent postwar social housing, has given to this area of Sussex, aspects of continuity and change that while mirroring the national picture, has its own particular landscape imprinted with the palimpsest of the centuries; a landscape that continues to evolve into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Patcham’s popular local image as the suburban icon is confirmed by the local newspaper article - ‘Who can save our suburbs?’ which was illustrated by a view of the eastern fringe of the Ladies Mile Estate.<sup>734</sup>

The interwar housing stock along the English Channel coast is no different essentially to that which can be seen along the coast of North Wales 300 miles away. The ‘shack-and-track’ areas which erupted on the chalk of Sussex were no different in their range of styles and in overall relationship to each other than to similarly originated collections of dwellings as far apart as Warwickshire’s Binley Woods, Surrey’s Walliswood or Kent’s Knatts Valley. Along the Channel littoral the cliff line shacks at Fairlight and the shingle colonies of Winchelsea Beach and Pett Level in East Sussex were in no form at variance to their distant counterparts at Withernsea in the East Riding of Yorkshire, Kinmel Bay in Conwy, Dinas Dinlle near Caernarfon or Jaywick Sands, Essex. The vernacular which marked out specific areas of Britain with distinctive housing related to the local building stone and timber, gave way to homogeneity of design and materials facilitated by the growth of internal transport

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<sup>733</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 13.3.2006; *Daily Telegraph* 21.2.2009 Weekend p1; *Sunday Telegraph* 30.3.2008 Home and Living p1; *Sunday Telegraph* 7.3.2004 ; *Daily Telegraph* 20.5.2008 p3; *Daily Telegraph* 8.9.2007 p21; *Daily Telegraph* 6.9.2007 p6

<sup>734</sup> *Argus* 28.3.2006 p8

communication. Paradoxically the variation was not between suburban modernity in Brighton and Caernarfon or plotland bungalows in Patcham and Prestatyn, the main dichotomy was between the core and its periphery.

Brighton with its core of Regency terraces and stuccoed crescents, bow-fronted Georgian squares and a glittering seafront was a far greater foil to the Patcham periphery of army huts, asbestos roofs, fake timbering and Sunburst gates. Yet while the built image of the city of Brighton and Hove is conveyed to the wider world as that of the early nineteenth century seaside, of the Royal Pavilion and Brunswick Town, by far the largest part of it is composed of Victorian terraces, Edwardian villas, 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban estates and 21<sup>st</sup> century inner-city redevelopments. The reality of Brighton urban life is less the raffish appeal and sophistication of Kemp Town or the ‘Boho-chic’ of the North Laine, both deep within the core; rather it is the peripheral ‘Scattered Squalor and Downland Homes’ of Patcham.

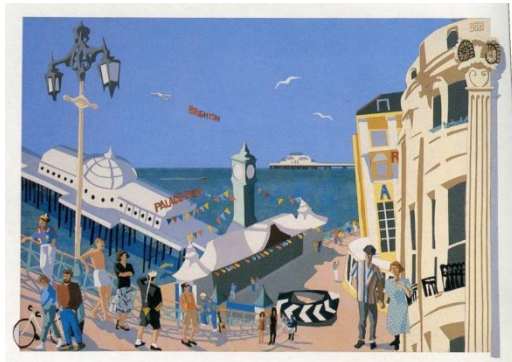


Fig 160

‘Brighton’  
Source: Nicholas Martin  
‘The Core’

Winfield Avenue, Patcham  
Source: author’s own image 28.3.2009  
‘The Periphery’

The view from my home rear window (fig 162) is a synthesis of Patcham’s landscape history; All Saints Church and the Court Farm Barn, top right, taking the present landscape back to the Middle Ages; north of the church the line of the A23, the old coach road into Brighton, is marked by the plotlands of the Bendigo estate; in the distance Sweet Hill - a name unchanged from the 1842 Tithe Survey - and the remains of the 1920’s ‘shack-and-track’ settlement. The late 20th century A27 Brighton by-pass crosses the chalk dry valley, a feature created in the late Pleistocene. The curve

of 1931 Vale Avenue, mid-picture, is on the Paine lands, evidenced from the 1750 Paine estate map; the 1938 Patcham school, bottom left, on Abergavenny land, the boundaries noted from the 1811 estate survey; the 1932 shopping parade mid-picture marks the boundary between the two estates. Behind the school left, the long bungalow is one of the first of the plotland dwellings constructed in 1925 on the site of a smallholding; its stylistic opposite, a 1934 white Modernist cube on the ridge above. The foreground is filled by the Dale Crescent housing and the speculative structures of Warmdean Road, a re-branding of the much older Worm's Dene.



Fig 161  
Patcham, north from Hartfield Avenue, Hollingbury.  
Source: author's own image 8.4.2004

The seeming chaos of the urban form is given structure as the palimpsest of Patcham.

Throughout this work the key themes explored have been those that enabled the suburb, and the Brighton suburb of Patcham in particular, to be observed, recorded and analysed. The thread of continuity and its associated changes has been shown in the progression from agriculture to land being - "...eminently suited...to building

purposes".<sup>735</sup> Its complex diversity arising from a myriad of interlinked factors-landownership, agricultural economic decline, architectural fashion, government housing policies, serendipitous occupancy; all created the suburban scene witnessed in the present. The suburb's evolution, whether in the wider sense of historic land-uses or of a narrower compass of changing suburban fashion, is a crucial aspect that illustrates its lifecycle. Finally, the time passed since the appearance in the fields and meadows of hutments and steel tents, bungalows and villas, has given to the suburb a degree of perspective whereby the pattern of building, the change of use and of styles can all be seen to be part of a wider process of landscape change. A process that as Cowper's stanza below shows, has been taking place far longer than is generally realised.

‘Suburban villas, highway side retreats,  
That dread the encroachment of our growing streets,  
Tight boxes neatly sash'd, and in a blaze  
With all a July sun's collected rays,  
Delight the citizen, who, gasping there,  
Breathes clouds of dust, and calls it country air.  
*Retirement*      William Cowper. 1781<sup>736</sup>

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<sup>735</sup> ESRO CHR/21/12

<sup>736</sup> (in) Betjeman J (1933) *Ghastly good taste* p64; Baird JD and Ryskamp C (1980) *The poems of William Cowper* p390

## Appendix 1

## Oral histories details

As has been noted in the thesis (pages 23-25) these accounts have been collected for a range of submitted university papers over the past 30 years and thus the current conventions on the recording and use of oral testimonies cannot be followed. As much detail as possible has been listed below, both for known addresses (at time of interview) and interview dates.

All addresses are Brighton unless otherwise stated.

Will Baker	29 St Giles Close, Shoreham, W.Sussex	13.1.2006
Dudley Barrowcliff	4 Court Close	8.3.2006
Stanley Bernard	2 The Compts, Peacehaven	(nk c2000)
Mrs Blacklock	2 Lyminster Avenue	26.10.2005
Olive Bourgeois	7 Court Close	8.3.2006
Alec Caig	23 Ladies Mile Road	2.11.1983
John Carter	21 Winfield Avenue	24.5.2006
George Clift	6 Elstead Crescent	31.7.2009
Ethel Darling	143 Mackie Avenue	18.7.2005
Wendy Davis	42 Sea Lane, Rustington, W.Sussex	31.7.07
Alan Deakin	12 Princes Avenue, Lancing, W.Sussex	30.6.2009
Winifred Diplock	20 Lowther Road	(nk c1993)
Marilyn Dodd	14 Nevill Road, Lewes, E.Sussex	26.7.2003
Mrs Dore	123 Ladies Mile Road	31.3.1983 & 6.4.1983
Mr & Mrs Drake	22 St. Helen's Drive, Hove	25.10.2000
Mr & Mrs Elms	Baranscraig Avenue	22.3.1983
Muriel Elms	Baranscraig Avenue	29.1.2003
Edith Gorton	16 Ladies Mile Court, Ladies Mile Road	18.4.2004
Roy Grant	Hungary (location not known)	18.3.2008
Mrs Gravett	258 Mackie Avenue	30.3.1983
Chris Greenwood	Fairlight Glen Farm, Riverside, Blackboys, E.Sussex	13.6.2009
Ron Harrington	The Paddocks, Isfield, E.Sussex	19.12.2008
John Hammond	Hassocks, W.Sussex	5.1.2007
John Higgs	41 Beechwood Avenue	10.8.2009
Arlette Hinton	258 Cowley Drive, Woodingdean	6.6.2007
Peter Holland	30 Dale Crescent	5.7.2006
Elizabeth Jenner	10 Sunnydale Close	5.4.2004
Bernard Johnson	Johnson Brothers store, Western Road	(nk c1984)
Les King	1 Rustington Road	26.10.2005
Joan Lees	Withdean Court, Tongdean Lane	6.5.2006
Peter Mercer	Heathfield, E.Sussex	(nk 1993)
Alice Mead	125 Ladies Mile Road	(various dates)
Chris Passmore	Applesham Farm, Lancing, W.Sussex	29.6.2007
Ray Prior	Surrenden Road	16.9.2009
Mr & Mrs Rolfe	10 Glynde Avenue, Goring, W.Sussex	5.2.2006 & 4.3.2006



Basil Seal	123 Conway St, Hove	(nk c1968)
Berys Shipley	20 Craginair Avenue	19.3.2003 & 2.6.2003
Mr & Mrs Slater	56 Mackie Avenue	23.3.1983
Esther Sowter	22 Cricket Field Road, Horsham, W.Sussex	23.6.2006
John Sparks	295 Upper Shoreham Road, Shoreham, W.Sussex	22.2.2006
Bob Spencer	Stocklands Farm, Hadlow Down, E.Sussex	11.5.2003
Naomi Stopps	104 Hawkhurst Road	23.6.2006
Mrs GM Taylor	50 Lincoln Avenue, Peacehaven, E.Sussex	30.3.1993
Marguerite Verrall	4 Dorset Road, Lewes, E.Sussex	20.2.2006
Mrs Weller	11 Midhurst Rise	22.1.2003
Peter Wells	Cliffe Radio & TV Cliffe High St, Lewes	5.3.1993
Rosemary Whatford	36 Warmdean Road	(nk c2003)
Rita White	'Rose Glen' Sweet Hill	22.9.2005
Morag Williams	Dumfries, Scotland	22.4.2006

### Personal Communication

A number of people loaned illustrative and documentary material for use in this thesis, their contributions are outlined in the preface pages x-xi

HD Davis whose early life history was vital to a major section of this research was believed to have moved to Australia long ago and could not be traced.

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 Oxford University Press (Building Today)

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Building Control record cards. Hove Town Hall

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ABE 32a	Abergavenny estate map 1750
ABE 33Y	Abergavenny estate papers 1921
Aber.box 2.G	Abergavenny estate papers. Bramlands farm 1924
ACC/A5310/76	Farrington and Whiting clients' papers. Land in Carden Avenue, Patcham 1924
AMS 3434	Paine estate map 1811
AMS 6438/49	Patcham parish council minute book 1913-23
AMS 6621/6/17	Sale particulars 12 Highview Ave North 1934
AMS 6871/5/1	advertising postcards RB Sentence and Co
C/C1/7	Brighton, Hove and District Joint Town Planning advisory committee: preliminary report 1928
C/C 70/203-206	Patcham electoral roll 1920
C/C 70/212	Patcham electoral roll 1923
C/C 70 /222	Brighton electoral roll 1932
CHR/21/12	Chichester estate papers. Patcham Court Farm sale particulars 1921
DB/B88/1/27	Land at Patcham, Ladies Mile Estate 1936
DB/D/88/3/17	Small Holdings nd c1930
DB/D27/41	Street naming plan Messrs Braybons Ltd 17.11.1937 (With additions 4.4.1938)
HOP 44/3	Paine family papers 1802-14
QDP/748/1	Brighton Water Bill 1924
SERDC 169/1	Steyning East Rural District Council submitted plans 1896-1927
SERDC 169B/1	Steyning East Rural District Council submitted plans 1896-1927
SERDC DB/B1/15	Brighton Water Bill minutes of evidence 1925
SERDC DB/56/2	Steyning East Rural District Council. Inherited records of Patcham parish council
SERDC DB/B/56/11	Steyning East Rural District Council .Surveyor's correspondence
SERDC DB/B57/10	Steyning East Rural District Council Patcham sewerage scheme
SERDC DB/D57/008/02	Steyning East Rural District Council submitted plans
SERDC DB/D57/8c3	Steyning East Rural District Council submitted plans
SERDC DB/D57/169/1	Steyning East Rural District Council submitted plans
SERDC DB/D57/169/B/01	Steyning East Rural District Council submitted plans
SERDC DB/D57/169/B/04	Steyning East Rural District Council submitted plans
SERDC DB/D57/169/D/02	Steyning East Rural District Council submitted plans
SERDC DB/57/211/A05	Steyning East Rural District Council submitted plans
SERDC DB/D57/211F/6	Steyning East Rural District Council submitted plans
SERDC DB/D57/211K	Steyning East Rural District Council submitted plans
SERDC DB/D57/506A/4	Steyning East Rural District Council submitted plans
SERDC DB/D57/534 A/5	Steyning East Rural District Council submitted plans
SERDC DM/A/1	Steyning East Rural District Council minute book
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### **Digital imagery**

Betjeman J (1972 re-mastered as DVD 2006) *Metro-land* BBC Worldwide

### **Personal communication (see appendix 1 for details)**

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